

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* of more than 350 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, 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".

C A R S T E N B U R M E I S T E R

The writings in my book mirror the status quo in respect of culture, politics, philosophy, religion and spirituality during the third decade of the third millennium in the modern era.

My intent is for future generations to see it as a subjective historical record - a mirror reflecting some of the mores and values that form the cornerstones of our society.



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Carsten Burmeister

Terms and Conditions

There is but one way to use this book:
before you start, clear your mind ...
be free of attitude, bias and judgement.

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 - (remember, I used to be a photographer, CB) - I had never suspected how deeply I would get caught up, in the writing of my book, in matters of visual appearance on all levels.

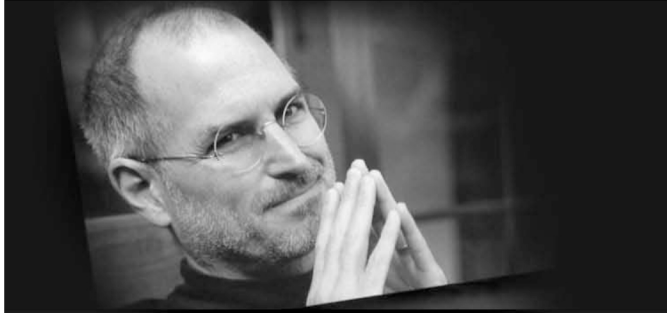
"Thus, thanks to the ease of using TV-edit (Microsoft Word for me, CB), whatever I wrote underwent polishing to make it look better on the screen, and though such control would at one time have been considered a luxury for an author, I was very attached to it and loath to give it up."

Douglas R. Hofstadter

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

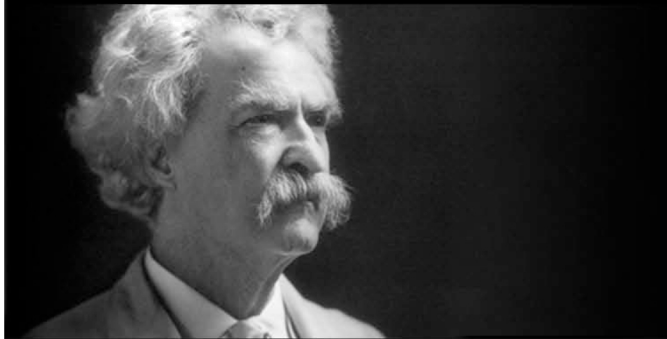
One of the ways that I believe people express their appreciation to the rest of humanity is to make something wonderful and put it out there.

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



**“You can avoid reality ... but you can not
avoid the consequences of avoiding reality.”**

*the Russian-American
Ayn Rand, 1905 - 1982*

<i>Ayn Rand was a writer and philosopher; she advocated reason as the only means of acquiring knowledge; she rejected faith and religion.</i>	<i>Rand was a libertarian and conservative; she supported laissez-faire capitalism and rational and ethical egoism, while she dismissed altruism.</i>
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lib·er·tar·i·an·ism
*nothing should be censored,
individual rights should be
maximized and valued above
communal rights, the role of
the state should be minimized*

con·ser·va·tism
*holding to traditional attitudes
and values and cautious about
change or innovation*

lais·sez faire cap·i·tal·ism
*abstention by governments
from interfering in the free
market*

eth·i·cal e·go·ism
*the theory that self-interest
acts as a conduit for morality*

al·tru·ism
*the selfless concern for the
well-being of others*
see also ALTRUISM

*Ayn Rand's aphorism regarding reality is profound;
however, the worldview of the staunchly conservative
libertarian is in stark contrast to my liberal life-stance,
as it is presented and affirmed throughout this book.
In liberal circles Rand's philosophy of "objectivism" is
deemed an odious cult - rejected, ignored or ridiculed *.*

*I have essays on REALITY and REDUCTIONISM
go also to the appendix page a100: What is Reality?*

**Bill Maher, New Rule: A Unified Theory of Wokeness.
“Who doesn't have moments from your past that
make you cringe. Who hasn't said, “I can't believe
I did that?” “You shoplifted gum.” “You wanted to be
a ghostbuster.” “I smoked.” “I was into numerology.”
And with a smirk: “I read Ayn Rand: Atlas Shrugged!”*

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*

**"I don't think there's any artist of any value
who does not doubt what they are doing."**

*film director Francis Ford Coppola
(The Godfather, Apocalypse Now)*

"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."* But go also to: OPINIONS. I like this: '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!) **F**riedrich Nietzsche said: *"nothing is real"*. He pondered the enigma of 'reality'; when you delve into my writings you will find that, so do I ... What is reality? There are many essays dealing with that question; again: explore! (pages a100.1.2) **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 125th 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 350.*

*** 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.*



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ANGER. Anger can be a healthy human emotion, when it focuses your and other's attention; it can lead to more successful negotiations, increased optimism, creativity and effective performance. Anger helps us read and respond to upsetting social situations ... in fact, repressing anger can actually hurt you. **O**ur fight response, which evolved so we can defend ourselves, stems from anger. Anger is a need to protect against aggression and be vigilant about threats; it sharpens our focus to act quickly and forcefully. Altruism is often born from anger, when we need to mobilize people to create support for a cause.

*with content from The Right Way to get Angry
greatergood.berkeley.edu*

*But when anger gets out of control it leads to problems
... it may destroy your quality of life; you can lose
your job or your relationship and even your family.
When all this occurs at once, anger threatens your life.*

see also ACCEPTANCE

ATTACHMENTS. We come into and leave this world alone. In between are our attachments. We're attached to our desires and these attachments prevent us from dealing with our self. **I**magine you were used to walking, but obtained a bicycle. You soon will be attached to it - until you get a motorbike. Now you're attached to the motorbike - until you get a car, which you'll soon wish to replace with a bigger and better one. That is how our lives are run - our attachments grow and grow. **W**e may go to church or seek solitude in a retreat or an ashram, but our attachments draw us back into the world of desires; contentment and inner peace are not achieved this way.

*Our attachments and our inability to detach result in
family feuds and neighbourly quarrels - in fact conflicts
on all levels. Ultimately it is attachments and our lack
of detachment that are the root of all discord and war.*

*see also BUDDHISM, DETACHMENT, HAPPINESS
and the appendix page a40: Science & technology, desire & attachments*

ATTENTION. "Pay attention to whom you're talking to, pay attention to what they're saying. Look at their face and watch and listen and try to understand what they're saying. **A**nd what you'll see is, questions pop into your mind, it's like, I didn't understand what you said. Can you clarify that? It sounds like you mean this, is that what you meant?" (Jordan Peterson). **P**ay attention to what you pay attention to. That's pretty much all you need ..." (Amy Krouse Rosenthal). "... which is so right, so wise. Attention is the greatest currency there is." (Julia Baird).

Susan Sontag: "A writer is someone who pays attention to the world."

see also COMMUNICATION, LISTENING, PRESENCE

BLASPHEMY. Some will consider my writings blasphemous ... I reject this notion in the strongest. To me the idiom blasphemy is an oxymoron. **I**f a belief is strong and built on the Truth*, nothing anyone said or did about it would be considered blasphemous by the devotees - the strength of their belief would deflect any criticism or insult as irrelevant. **I**f, however, believers are offended by whom they call a blasphemer, their faith is weak and untrue - in which case the term blasphemy does not apply.

blas·phe·my
*the act - or offence - of speaking
sacrilegiously about sacred things*

ox·y·mo·ron
*a figure of speech, incongruous,
paradoxical and contradictory*

The only thing sacred is love; thus it is love alone we shall treat with the utmost respect. *Only the love for humanity can be blasphemed: By bigotry, fanaticism, abuse, war.*

**see also THE TRUTH*

BODY MIND SPIRIT. While we are on our quest for happiness we shall strive for balance between the three entities that constitute our persona, our character and the public image we present to the world. **B**ody is the physical part of us that requires constant maintenance, alignment and adjustment*; the kind we provide with living a healthy life, as we exercise, eat well, consume no drugs ... and alcohol only moderately, if at all. **M**ind is the brain function that runs our lives; it makes the executive decisions that impact us on the material level, personally, professionally, publicly. We need a healthy mind to function effectively ... without breakdown or depression. **S**pirit is the seat of our spirituality; here we address the 'bigger picture', the aspects of our existence beyond the running of our daily lives. Our spirituality is the bedrock of our morality and virtues ... it informs our ethics and values.

Furthermore: With our body we inhabit the material world and function in space and time.

Mind consigns us to the present moment, but we shall remember the past and learn from it, without clinging to it; it makes plans for the future, but should desist from expectations, to avoid anxiety.

Spirit - as our soul, our heart, our inner, higher self, our consciousness - transcends those boundaries.

** Our bodies are best treated professionally for health and longevity; to that end my sons run unitygym.com ... they've done so since 2004, training people for fitness, strength and flexibility.*

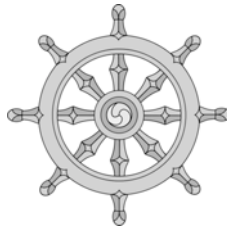
*see also BELIEF, CONSCIOUSNESS
ETHICS, MIND, SOUL MIND BODY
SPIRITUAL and SPIRITUALITY
but also REDUCTIONISM*

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, anger or suffering; once in nirvana, one lives in accordance with dharma. **M**indfulness meditation is an aid to attaining the state of nirvana.

see also MINDFULNESS and the appendix page a22.3: Buddha quotes

*"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

a Buddhist maxim: "enlightened conduct is to relinquish desires, not to crave fulfilment of desires."

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

BITS. Atoms and bits. The former constitute our physical world. The latter are the basis of our digital world, such as the internet. Atoms can be explosive ... bits - on social media - even more so.*
Since 1963 Wired magazine has covered the digital revolution.**

**After Alan Rusbridger and his book Breaking News
** with Nicholas Negroponte of Wired magazine.*

*The **B**inary dig**IT** is the basic unit of
information in computing and
digital communications.*

*see also BITCOIN
SOCIAL MEDIA*

BUSY. Most of us are busy most of the time. We are too busy to read books; too busy to meditate; too busy to relax; too busy for the important things in life ... we are too busy to live well. **O**ur lives are filled with work and with the exploits we deem necessary for survival; we mis-interpret the maxim 'to live well' as we succumb to the pressure to own a big house and a fancy car. **A**ll along we 'have no time'; we seek escape and anaesthesia. To that end we will watch tv for hours every day, instead of pursuing the things that may give us peace of mind and to live well. **W**e should prioritize and not give those pursuits 'left-over time'.

*after The Daily Stoic by Ryan Holiday, October 25, 30
also go to ALONE, COMPLEXITY, Q&A 2, STILLNESS*

*To be busy with philosophy is a hobby of mine;
to that end I may forgo many trivial pursuits,
even company and conversation with friends.*

see also page XIV

CELESTIAL TEAPOT. With his analogy of the Celestial Teapot the philosopher and atheist Bertrand Russell refuted the idea that the burden of proof lies with the sceptic to disprove claims of religions that cannot be proven to be false. **R**ussell wrote: "If I implied there is a teapot revolving around the sun, nobody could disprove my claim. But if I were then to say since my assertion cannot be disproved, it is intolerable to doubt it - I rightly would be accused of talking nonsense. **H**owever, if the existence of such a teapot were affirmed in ancient books, taught as the sacred truth every Sunday and instilled into the minds of children at school, hesitation to believe in its existence would become a mark of eccentricity." **I**n his book *The God Delusion* Richard Dawkins elaborates: "The reason organized religion merits outright hostility is that, unlike belief in Russell's teapot, religion is powerful and systematically passed on to children too young to defend themselves. **C**hildren are not compelled to spend their formative years memorizing loony books about teapots. Schools don't exclude children whose parents prefer the wrong shape of teapot. People putting milk in first don't knee-cap those who put tea in first. **T**eapot-believers don't stone teapot-unbelievers to death." Thank you, Mr. Dawkins.

CRACK. My 4-year-old grandson watched me making lunch, scrambled eggs on toast. He picked up an egg and inspected it. **B**e careful, they are fragile." With my attention turned to the frypan, suddenly ... crack! With foreboding I swung around: **A** crushed egg in his hand. Without missing a beat, he said: "Opa, you've got to buy eggs with stronger shells."

CHILDREN. When we were children, we were the center of the world; we thought the world revolved around us. The world did not mind, and - between you and me - it actually was true. **T**hen we became adults. We realised we are not the centre of the world; the world is quite unforgiving if we do not humbly accept this fact. **W**hen we need to be humbled, the world knows how to humble us - it sends us children. **O**ur children as teachers of humility; I like that.



my two little boys at their sister's birth in 1985

And now all of my kids have children themselves; five boys: Jackson, Bodhi, Koby, Keanu, Elijah. How exciting ... what a wonderful family I have.

Thank you all for being in my life ... I may have said, this book is for no one and everyone, but in truth, it is for you. See also p. a31: Happy Birthday to Me.

Saskia is an actor, photographer, videographer, producer, editor and social media content creator. You can find her at www.saskiaturmeister.com

Radjin (Rad) and Yani are running an online business, www.unitygym.com ... they have been in the personal training / fitness industry since 2004.

CHARITY. "How does one attain perfection?" the Bishop was asked. "You must love God and your neighbour with all your heart." **B**ut how do I love God and my neighbour with all my heart?" "You must love God and your neighbour as yourself." "I know all that; **I** am no further than I was before ... please, tell me *how* to acquire such love." "Charity, charity is both the means and the end ... **t**he only way by which we reach perfection."

From a talk with the Bishop of Geneva - excerpted from the book The Spirit of St. Francis de Sales by Jean Pierre Camus, as quoted in Aldous Huxley's The Perennial Philosophy, chapter five: Charity.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." That is the dictum by Jesus, as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew. But why just the neighbour? To my mind talk here is about universal love - for all of humanity.

see also THE TRUTH

CLIMATE CHANGE DENIALISM. Humans started contributing to climate change approximately twelve thousand years ago, when they began farming. Anthropogenic global warming primarily is a result of agriculture - especially animal husbandry - and the resulting deforestation, as well as industrial development and the burning of fossil fuels. This process had been gradual over millennia, but has sped up in the twentieth century. Climate science is conducted world-wide by about three thousand climate scientists in over one hundred and thirty countries, most of whom - approx. ninety seven percent - agree climate change is occurring and is largely caused by human activity. "To gain an understanding of the level of scientific consensus on climate change, one study examined every article on climate change published in peer-reviewed scientific journals over a ten-year period. Of the nine hundred twenty eight articles on climate change the authors found, not one of them disagreed with the consensus position that climate change is happening and is human-induced", says academic and environmental activist David Suzuki.* It is baffling that people - laypersons as well as academics - allow themselves an 'opinion' on the matter and have a 'belief' whether climate science is accurate, or whether climate change is human made. Yet, the phenomenon of climate change denialism is very real. It is near incomprehensible, indeed embarrassing and dismaying** that otherwise intelligent people fall into the trap of dis- and mis-information, denial and propaganda, as they follow the blinkered line of arguments provided by vested interests - such as mining and energy industries - who oppose the vitally necessary steps that are required to counter climate change.

*David Suzuki Foundation - www.davidsuzuki.org/issues/climate-change/science/climate-change-basics/climate-change-deniers

**Newspaper (The Australian) wages campaign against climate change science
Robert Manne, The Sydney Morning Herald (SMH), 3 Sept 2011

Two Climate Change Denialism myths debunked:

Climate Change has been happening for millions of years, it is not unusual at all.

Correct. Climate Change - in principle - is a natural phenomenon. However, what is unnatural and unusual is the speed with which it has occurred from 1900 to 2000, the period of the Industrial Revolution. In those one hundred years temperatures have risen globally by one degree Celsius. This is extraordinary - such a rise in temperature normally takes place over thousands, if not tens of thousands of years.

Humans produce just three percent of carbon dioxide, nature ninety seven per cent.

Correct. Humans' output of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide is small compared to the amounts output by nature. However, while nature has produced large amounts of CO2 for millions of years, no less than one hundred percent of natural CO2 gets absorbed again by nature; whereas human production of CO2 largely is not naturally absorbed - it is cumulative, and as a result we have global warming.

Note: It is important to differentiate between the two types of Climate Change (CC). Natural CC causes an Ice Age approx. every one hundred thousands years, probably due to the eccentricity of Earth's orbit around the Sun; the planet warms and cools in oscillations of about seven degrees Celsius; approx. one degree every ten to fifteen thousand years, which is too slow to notice. Anthropogenic CC occurs in our lifetime. Incidentally, Earth currently is 'naturally' cooling, i.e. we're heading for another Ice Age; this will affect future humans - if indeed we shall survive - in tens of thousands of years.

www.livescience.com/58407-how-often-do-ice-ages-happen.html

With the widespread consensus on climate science, is there any disagreement at all? Is the science settled in every detail?

Climate change denialists invariably say: 'The science on climate change and global warming is not settled - there is not widespread agreement among scientists.' Well, they're right, that is correct too: 'In regard to many specific questions ...

*as to the precise impact on global temperatures, sea levels, acidification of oceans, the rate of melting of ice sheets and glaciers, the pace of extinctions, intensity of hurricanes, bushfires, droughts and floods ... the sciences indeed are not settled.'***

A disturbing tv film The Age Of Consequences, says climate change is impacting on vital resources, migration patterns and conflict zones.

Q: Will humanity overcome the challenges posed by CC?

A: Yes - go to FUSION, PRECIPICE, REALITY 0, THREE THOUSAND

in the appendix go to a38 The Future is Now and a39 Humanity's Potential; also a58.1.2 - how long we've known about anthropogenic CC ... will future generations forgive us? No

Note: CC denialism is damaging, but so is resignatory CC acceptance. Some people say, "yeah, climate change is an issue, but there is really not much that I can do about it, and whatever we'd do would cost jobs, and far too much money". They secretly think: ('anyway, it doesn't really affect me, I live in a safe area [safe from floods, fires, cyclones, droughts] and if it gets too hot, well, we have airconditioning; it is more important my investments and my job are safe'). It's awful how many people subscribe to that attitude.

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); incomprehensible too is that people pay for clothes that prominently display their brand's logo ... instead of getting paid for wearing them

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 could be due to some of my writings going back decades. Views - truths - change. **T**hink of Jainism, where one truth or another or both may be true.

see also JAINISM, TRUTH, 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. That 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 5, REDUCTIONISM and the appendix p. a100.

Another definition of Buddhist enlightenment is the absence of delusion and the notion of ‘self’ (me, myself, my, mine); also the ability to live without the need for approval by peers.

Furthermore, enlightenment induces ‘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.

see also ANESIS and the appendix page a81.2 Epicureanism

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/...](http://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 sin-
cere 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 be-
havior, 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, 4, 7
***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 hu-
man mind." F. Herbert, in his 1965 novel Dune.*

see also AI

Bioethics - pioneered by Peter Singer - is both a field of study and professional practice, interested in ethical issues related to health (primarily focused on humans, but also animals), including those emerging from advances in biology, medicine and technologies ... it discusses moral discernment in society. **B**ioethics is related to questions like the well-being of ecosystems and is concerned with the ethical questions that arise in the relationships among life sciences, biotechnology, medicine, politics, law, theology and philosophy; it also includes the study of values relating to public health and primary care. **B**ioethics' other branches are ethical education in science, animal ethics as well as environmental ethics.

see also SINGER, UTILITARIANISM

ESSENTIALISM. *'Weniger aber besser'** ... (less but better), is the German way of saying, unclutter and improve your life. **With** an unscattered, clear mind a reckoning takes place with what held us back in respect of productivity and peace of mind. **Essentialists** will rigorously ascertain what they want to invest their time and effort in; they have learnt the art of saying, "No". **They** don't just do less in the time they have, but they recognize what is the prudent thing to do, without getting caught up in trivia. **They** are able to discern which essentials advance their agenda.

*after Greg McKeown's book
Essentialism - 'the disciplined pursuit of less'
a term coined by the chief designer of BRAUN consumer goods

EUTHANASIA. I watched a tv documentary from Holland about a man tormented by a disease that took away his ability to move or to speak clearly. It showed the man was in much pain; there was no cure and for all the doctors knew, he only had weeks to live - with his pain worsening day by day. **Throughout** his suffering he expressed the wish that his life be ended once it became unbearable. After consultation with other professionals and authorities, his doctor agreed to perform euthanasia on the patient. When the day came, the doctor visited the couple's house and prepared two needles. **The** injections were administered and while they took a few minutes to take effect, husband and wife said a final goodbye. Soon the man's heart stopped beating. All the while the wife and doctor talked about her feelings - she expressed immense sadness, but also relief that his ordeal finally was over.

*Death on Request
Maarten Nederhorst, Ikon TV, 1994*

A woman helped a friend obtain Nembutal, a drug used to euthanize animals. After his death she was convicted of manslaughter. Before she could be sentenced she suicided. She also used Nembutal, but - to protect her loved ones from prosecution - she died alone.

*Suicide accomplice, a modern whodunit
Geesche Jacobsen, SMH, 23 Sept 2008*

A thirty-one year old woman died of the effects of Crohn's disease and colon cancer - in her last hour, her brother had to hold a bowl under her chin, as she vomited up faecal matter.

While she researched euthanasia, she withdrew from family and friends ... to protect them. But she produced a video in which she described her pain, her suffering and her indignity:

"All I wanted after 16 years of painful Crohn's disease and now cancer, is die a peaceful death. Because euthanasia is banned, I am denied this right; I beg the government: Legalise euthanasia.

"The law would not let a dog suffer the agony I am going through, it would be put down. If euthanasia was legal, I could have ended my days in peace ... not in panic and more pain."

*Robbed of my living and my dying
Sherrill Nixon, SMH, 13 Sept 2008*

ENVY. Envy is an emotion that occurs when a person lacks another's superior quality, achievement or possession and desires it or wishes the other lacked it. **Bertrand Russell** said that not only is the envious person rendered miserable by their envy, but that person may also wish to inflict misfortune on others. **Envy** is one of the most potent causes of unhappiness.

The devil's assistant accosted a priest, who was praying to God, "I have tried everything to bring him around - to no avail." The devil whispered into the priest's ear, upon which he threw his cross into the dirt and angrily cursed God. What did the devil say to the priest? "God just made your brother bishop."

EVIL. A driver got out of his car at a traffic light and killed the driver in front, who had veered into 'his' lane. **We** find evil only in others, since that's the only place we look - but everyone is capable of evil and it comes to the fore in the oddest of circumstances. **To** look for evil only in others ignores our own nature; it also ignores the nature of the world's problems.

see also DEVIL

EXPECTATIONS. Many factors contribute to our anxiety and depression, such as attachments, fear, delusions, desires, addictions, greed and egotism. **Expectations** is one of them; they are a trap that snaps shut as we live life with ever-present wishful thinking. **Expectations** are developed by an over-active ego that instils a sense of entitlement; we fall victim to the demands of our gross mind (ego) for undue benefits. **Expectations** foster delusions; they cloud reality and hold us back when we should apply common sense. **Expectations** - when they're unrealistic - keep us from assessing our prospects rationally; they build up unreasonable hopes that only too often can't be fulfilled. **Expectations** - when unfulfilled - disappoint, cause anger and misery, hinder our wellbeing and inhibit our freedom.

ex·pec·ta·tion

*the strong belief that something will
happen or be the case in the future*

Expectations are the enemy of happiness. The stoics say 'don't have expectations, go with the natural progression of things,' and 'freedom is secured not with the fulfilment of desires, but with the elimination of desires.' However, this is my favourite, 'how strange to be surprised at anything in life.'

see also STOICISM, SECRET
and page a30 in the appendix
about the 'Law of Attraction'

EXISTENCE. Why did we come into existence? In this world there is no answer to this question - so we are left to ask: How did we come into existence? **B**ut this question also is difficult to answer - unless we consider the concept of duality, where an overarching, primordial energy exists other than the material. **S**ciences can explain our existence back to the very beginning, to the Big Bang; beyond that, however, scientists are not satisfied with the notion of a non-material creative energy, since it is unacceptable that matter stems from anything but matter. However, in his book *The Mind of God*, physicist Paul Davies puts the problem like this: "In confronting the deep issue of existence, we have to consider the possibility of two distinct classes of things" ... namely 'necessary' and 'contingent'. **B**ut scientists were at pains with the notion that the two might mix: A necessary force could not create a contingent universe. So - how did we come into existence? **A** clue lies in that on a quantum (the tiniest) level, what we deem material nevertheless is energy too; hence the notion *All Is One* (in scientific terms *energy*, in philosophical terms *consciousness*). Duality emerges when from the primordial, necessary energy a new energy materializes, which must be considered contingent. **T**his energy does the "dirty work" for God*. Through the manifestation of nature and the human mind, this energy makes up the universe and rules our existence.

** I always use the word God - or creator - with reservation ... there is so much room for misinterpretation. I sometimes use the term similarly to Einstein and Spinoza: God is not the kind, loving entity who runs our lives ... but the aspect of the universe we cannot yet comprehend.*

Imagine our world didn't exist, the creation had never come into being. No cosmos, no body, no mind. Now we are left with a space (if that is unacceptable, an energy); I find it easier to comprehend the existence of this space / energy, instead of there being no space or energy.

So, into this necessary space - or energy - the contingent mind, body, cosmos - the creation - were introduced. How or why? We probably will never know; but perhaps this is the wrong question. In my view a more pertinent question is: How could this duality NOT exist?

nec·es·sar·y
something that is required for something else to exist
con·tin·gent
something that depends on something else to exist

see also CONSCIOUSNESS, DUALITY, EINSTEIN, FIRST CAUSE, FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE
INTELLIGENT DESIGN, REDUCTIONISM, THEORY OF EVERYTHING, WHY

EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE. Scientists like Carl Sagan and Stephen Hawking said it would be improbable for life *not* to exist anywhere other than on Earth. **L**ife may have emerged independently in many places; alternatively, life may have spread by meteoroids between habitable planets. Dr. Frank Drake developed the **D**rake Equation, a probabilistic argument that calculates the likelihood of extraterrestrial life in our Milky Way galaxy at between a thousand and a hundred million. **B**ut professor Paul Davies reckons we'll never know of other civilisations out there; the distances are prohibitively vast, even just for radio communications to reach us. **A**nother scientist, prof. Brian Cox, deems extraterrestrial life to be highly unlikely, the conditions for life arising are so complex, they may not be present elsewhere. **A**lso, intelligent extraterrestrial life may unwittingly have rendered itself extinct; in that scenario intelligent life destroys itself as soon as it becomes advanced. **M**oreover, the physicist believes, "humanity could well be approaching that point."

see also: AI, COX, THE GREAT FILTER; *the appendix pages a83: Stop AI development, a89: Life*

IDENTITY. Most of us revel in our identity, whether it is defined by race, religion, nationality, wealth or station in life. **F**rom there it is a small step to engage in identity politics; we seek to advance the defining characteristics of our identity. **B**ut we easily get caught up in a process of denigrating others; those of another religion, another nationality or another race. **I**dentify politics is often intolerant, perhaps even destructive; to identify too strongly with a group may be counterproductive. **W**e are all one race: Humans. We are equals and no aspect of one group's identity makes it superior to another group.

see also BLACK with Stan Grant's quote in the footnotes

ILLUSION vs DELUSION. Illusions are benign; an illusory belief may not be dogmatic and probably not affect others. **D**elusions may be destructive; then a belief leads one to commit dogmatic, undemocratic, in extreme cases violent deeds.

INTERFAITH. Pluralism, syncretism and interfaith strive to create harmony among the world's religions and faiths. **T**hat aim is guided by the notion that religious beliefs are easily polluted, and thus become dictatorial and fascistic. **F**or that reason we have to grasp the dynamics and diversity of beliefs - without this understanding there will be no peace. **I** am most interested in the aspect of interfaith that denotes it as secular, where we do not indulge in specific religionism. **I**nterfaith allows me to study, get to know and appreciate different religions without the need to be religious myself.

plu·ral·ism

co-existence of diverse ethnic or religious backgrounds

syn·cre·tism

the fusion of unrelated philosophical or religious beliefs

in·ter·faith

interaction between people of different religious faiths

re·lig·ion·ism

intense religious fervour with a tendency to proselytise

see also BELIEF, UNIVERSAL RELIGION, PHILOSOPHIA PERENNIS

*In his book The Quiet Revolution (the emergence of Interfaith Consciousness) Peter Kirkwood gives voice to Allan Lokos's and Susanna Weiss's New York Community of Peace and Spirituality, who summarise their goals thus: **COMMUNITY:** It is our mission to nurture a community that explores the commonality of all humankind, and concurrently honours our differences. We believe the essence of spiritual practice is to reconnect with our true nature and our innate essence of peace and happiness. This we do for ourselves and for the benefit of all beings. **PRACTICE:** Our mission is to provide weekly gatherings of celebration that transform fear, depression, frustration, anger into love, hope, encouragement and joy. **OUTREACH:** It is our mission to provide community outreach programs including family services,*

*hospital and home visits, meditation classes and educational study groups that can heal and uplift the spirit. **EDUCATION:** It is our mission to educate and exhilarate our children through innovative and creative programs that develop the total person spiritually, intellectually and emotionally. **EXPLORATION:** It is our mission to support each other's journey of self-exploration and growth as we seek the highest expression of ourselves. **EXPANSION:** It is our mission to train and support those who wish to create new communities and share the philosophy of peace. **INCLUSIVENESS:** It is our mission to provide these services from a position of total inclusiveness and acceptance without regard for race, creed, colour, age, gender, sexual orientation, economic or social status.*

[www.interfaithhome.org/
about_us_mission_statement.htm](http://www.interfaithhome.org/about_us_mission_statement.htm)

INTELLIGENT DESIGN. This essay refers not to intelligent design that claims the world was created six thousand years ago, but that there may be intelligence in the structure of the universe. **I**saac Newton, a heretic and no slave to conventional religious belief, said, "this most beautiful system of the sun, planets etc. could only have proceeded from the counsel of an intelligent being." **A**lbert Einstein, a secular Jew who repeatedly affirmed his disbelief in a personal God - he deemed the idea "childish" - stated: "The scientist's religious feeling takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the thinking and acting of human beings are utterly insignificant reflections." **S**tephen Hawking, himself an avowed atheist and opponent of intelligent design, refers to our universe as "an apparent miracle". **I**t is likely Newton, Einstein and Hawking understood they were not making scientific claims ... but abstract, metaphysical ones.

*after Intelligent Design, maybe true, maybe false, but not absurd
by Raymond M. Bergner, professor of psychology
www.researchgate.net*

see also EINSTEIN, EXISTENCE, FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE *and in the appendix p. a86*, Paul Davies: the "hard problem": the universe may have been kick-started by a "powerful agent"

INTIMACY. One of the greatest pleasures in life is intimacy. That time on a Sunday morning ... waking up, with my partner next to me; there is no reason to get up, no time-constraint. **I** start caressing my lover, I stroke and kiss her and after a while I gently proceed to us making love. She moans and approves with a whispered "I love you", to which I respond likewise. **K**nowing my love is reciprocated and my advances are welcome is the most wonderful aspect of our intimacy; when we confirm our love with giving ourselves willingly, we perform sacred sex. **S**ome men seek intimacy with unwilling partners. They will impose on vulnerable women and men; or use outright force. They may say, "oh, that is just the way I am"; or claim consent. **T**hey often protest they had no inkling their advances upset the victims, and apologise ... but these sexual predators destroy lives; many of the victims don't get over the assault for decades, if ever. **T**he Weinsteins and Spaceys of the world use their positions of power to exploit and abuse people who crave their approval. One of them was (and is again) 'president of the free world' ... **G**od help us.

*another is Sogyal Rinpoche
author of The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*

INTUITION is the promise of acquiring knowledge without conscious reasoning ... intuition may help with problem solving *. **H**owever, we must be aware that 'gut feelings' may mislead us; intuition then is deemed an irrational function, averse to rationality.

**see the footnote to PEACE, with the story about Stanislav Petrov
see also TRUTHINESS*

ISLAM. Some say Islam is a peaceful religion, others - like Sam Harris - say Islamic fundamentalists and jihadists prove otherwise. **C**an a faith be seen as peaceful that promises followers paradise if: "... they fight for Allah - they will slay and be slain"? (Qur'an 9.111)

see also HARRIS, JIHADISM, RELIGION 6, SCRIPTURE, WAR 4

PURPOSE OF LIFE. Once a man wanted to know the purpose of life; the story has it there was a sage who meditated in a cave on a mountain. **So** the man climbed the mountain, found the mystic, and asked his question, only to be told: "Go and find your own cave, meditate, and you will know." **Is** there a more practical answer? Yes, the Dalai Lama says: "Be happy." Saints will tell you: "Know the Truth"; while a philosopher may say: "Know your Self", or "find meaning" ... but also: "Expressed in language, the query is meaningless." **While** pondering all this, you will probably just raise a family and do your duty.

*see also DUTY, MEANING and in the appendix page a59:
Building our own meaning and purpose*

PUTIN. Russia's president Putin - in a two hour speech a few days before the one year anniversary of his war in Ukraine - accused the West of having started the war: "**W**e are confident in our power, truth is with us. Western elites are a symbol of total, unprincipled lies to their people. They started the war. We are using force to stop it." **P**utin's mind is irrational, warped, perverse as he creates his own self serving reality; and he most likely believes what he says. Vladimir Putin - the Adolf Hitler of our times.

*This is the question: Is the war in Ukraine Putin's war or Russia's war?
From the Western perspective it seems clear: Since Putin is a despotic
autocrat (nothing happens in Russia without Putin) it is Putin's war.*

*From Russia it looks different ... from their point of view Ukraine had
been part of the Imperial Russian Empire and needs to be 'repatriated';
the West denies this reading of history and thus "started the war".*

*A delusion similar to Hitler's, who deemed Poland a legitimate addition
to the German 'Lebensraum' (living space) ... both delusions disastrous,
as both of them encompass first laying the regions to waste and ruin.*

QUALIA. In philosophy of the mind, qualia are defined as instances of subjective conscious experiences. The term derives from the Latin adjective *quālis*, meaning 'of what sort' or 'of what kind' in relation to a specific instance, such as: '**W**hat it is like to taste a specific apple' ... or 'how to describe the redness of red'.

*qua·li·a (singular: quale)
the internal and subjective component of sense perceptions
arising from stimulation of the senses by phenomena*

QUALITY. In *ZEN And The Art Of Motorcycle Maintenance* Robert Pirsig writes: "To live only for some future goal is shallow. It's the sides of the mountain which sustain life ... the only Zen you find on the top is the Zen you bring up there." On the surface the book is about a motorcycle trip by the author and his son Chris. **B**ut for Pirsig the trip is a venture into metaphysics and philosophy. His exploration of Quality is a meditation on the symbiosis of subject and object, actor and act; working well on a motorcycle, caring, being in the moment, is to achieve inner peace. **I**n this sense living in Zen is to be intimately engaged in the process of life. When we are 'in the present' ... we find that life potentially has a better Quality.

Quality is Dharma

Quality is the Buddha. Quality is Truth, Quality is Reality. Quality is the goal of art. "It remains to work these concepts into a practical, down-to-earth context; and there is nothing more practical and down-to-earth than what I have been talking about all along ... the repair of an old motorcycle."

Quality is Caring

After a while Chris said, "can I have a motorcycle when I get old enough?" "If you take care of it." "What do you have to do?" "Lots of things, you've been watching me." "Will you show me all of them?" "Sure." "Is it hard?" "Not if you have the right attitude. It's having the right attitude that's hard."

Afterword

"What was the ulterior motive for writing the book?" And this one; "there is none. Writing it seemed to have higher Quality than not writing it, that's all." There is a dark aftermath to the afterword: "Chris is dead, he was murdered." "But there was another child, a little girl, Nell ... our life is back in perspective again." Robert M. Pirsig

*Yet, Quality cannot be defined ... it can only be understood
intellectually by the use of analogy. Dan Glover:*

Lila's Child: An Inquiry Into Quality

see also DHARMA, ZEN

Q & A. A milestone on my path of searching for knowledge and truth was the opportunity to ask the Master a question that had been occupying me - about the two opposing forces in my life. **T**he first one I know much about - it is the positive, uplifting force; we read about it, study it, reflect on it, often refer to it and we sing hymns about it - yet, who can say they live in full awareness of it? **T**hen there's the opposing force. I knew little about it, but I was very aware of it - it's the negative, down-pulling force that makes me judge and damn, lie and cheat. This was the Master's answer: **"Y**ou see, the negative force is the mind. It is not some entity that is hiding somewhere, it is mind itself, that is the negative force. And our fight in meditation is with the mind - meditation means: **T**o fight the mind. As long as the mind is pulled toward worldly senses, you can say it is your enemy - when it is attached to the soul, its tendency is upward and inward, and it is your friend. **B**ut success depends on the individual and how deep they are entrenched in this creation - not just in this life, but over the many lives we have been here. It is a constant effort, brother."

*Guru Maharaj Charan Singh Ji (1916 - 1990) Delhi, India, 1987
for a full transcript of this q & a go to Radha Soami Greetings
spring 1991, Radha Soami Satsang Beas, USA, pages 47 - 48
visit also my www.carstenburmeister.com/sant-mat page*



Q & A two. At the same meeting a young woman from America asked this question: "I got married a couple of years ago and we have a baby. I now find that my life has changed dramatically. I am so busy all day long, I don't seem to be able to make time for myself anymore, and I hardly get around to meditating. I am concerned that I am losing my individuality. What can I do to find myself again?" The Master answered: **"Y**ou see, sister, the problem with you Western people is that you over-analyse everything. You look for meaning where there is none ... you worry too much. Don't worry. Go with the flow."

see also BUSY, STOICISM

REALITY 1. There are numerous aspects to reality. One that is difficult for many people to comprehend is that there is no God *. This is one of the biggest problems ... indeed a problem from which much strife in the world emanates. **I**f everybody accepted this truth, humanity would be free of dogmas, intolerance and fanaticism; the faithful could practice their religious rituals and be tolerated by other religions as well as secularists ... without the fear of God, we would be free **. **O**f great significance in the context of reality and religion is that while it is a fact that there is no God, the various religious groups should be supported in their right to their belief, in their version of God (as long as they are tolerant and non-violent). **D**iverse cultural groups would co-exist and get on with living together peacefully; however, as long as the existence of God is considered a dogma worth fighting for, peace will be elusive and tribes with differing creeds and ideologies will fight wars. **R**egarding religion, the reality is they are taken too seriously by delusional believers. There are dozens, indeed hundreds of religious beliefs, of beliefs in God or gods ... yet, believers take the stance that their belief trumps others, with disregard to reality.

**God = a supernatural agent, actively interested in the affairs of human individuals*

*** How realistic is this approach? Is this just free-wheeling word-play? No. If we accepted the no. 1 and no. 4 Gods and disowned the no. 2 God - as per my essay GOD 1 - we would attain a conflict-free life, with the belief in what Meister Eckhart spoke of ... "the greatness God has set up in the soul [in consciousness, at the time of creation, CB] so that by those means man may realize God; as I speak of God, I speak of the purity of the divine nature". See GOD 2 and a92*

*My essay GOD 6 also is pertinent in this context, where I say: "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)."*

*GOD 5 spells out that it isn't necessary to believe in God * in order to be religious.*

Go to appendix page a34 Belief vs Reality; and page a68 refers to 'atheist spirituality'.

Furthermore, go to ATHEIST SPIRITUALITY, BELIEF, FAITH, INTERFAITH, RELIGION.

REALITY 2. Our concept of reality is described by our senses; real is what we can see, hear, taste, smell and touch. But things we can see and touch will disintegrate in time; they are fleeting manifestations of energies that pervade the universe. So are they real? At the time, and for our mind, yes. **T**here is another way of looking at reality. To understand it we must accept the notion of duality. 'We' are both a physical and a non-material being, and it is the spiritual us that is free of what affects body and mind. **N**ow reality holds a different meaning. It refers not any more to what we experience with our senses, but to what we know is everlasting - our soul. **F**or those who are thus in touch with their self, the rewards are great. 'Reality' will not impact them as it does others. They cope with what brings down those who only look at the here and now. What they know will pass is not real to them. **H**ave you ever wondered how people cope with utter humiliation, with total violation of their most basic human rights? Everything that we own, that we are, as physical beings, can be taken away. If we are stripped of all that defines reality to us - including our bodies - we are left with our soul, our spirit. **U**ltimately we can be comforted only by the insight that soul / spirit alone is real.

This take on reality derives from the notion of our soul being the same as our spirit, which in turn is synonymous with higher consciousness.

It then follows that the individual higher consciousness is a part of the universal consciousness, like a drop is a part of the ocean.

In the context of these essays about reality, we shall make ourselves aware of the unchanging nature of consciousness and indeed spirit & soul.

However, by the same token, of importance is that we don't lose sight of the fact that all beliefs, religions and philosophies are mind-constructs.

*see also BELIEF, CONSCIOUSNESS, DUALITY
as well as REDUCTIONISM*

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.

SPIRIT. Is there another term in the English language so ambivalent, ambiguous, so doubled in meaning, indeed so oxymoronic? Our spirits are our inner selves, our hearts, our souls, our God within. Then there are spirits we consume that may dull our spirit.

SPIRITUAL. To be spiritual is to integrate into one's life the awareness that no possession, occurrence or condition is of permanence. To be spiritual is to aspire to the highest ethical principles, to practise compassion, understanding, acceptance and detachment. To be spiritual is to seek knowledge of the true nature of things (to grasp reality*), to do one's duty and to live in balance. To be spiritual is to accept higher justice and to heed the Golden Rule: Do to others only what you would like to have done to yourself.

Furthermore, the anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner said: To be spiritual is to "develop a healthy body and mind; feel at one with all of life; be aware that work on our inner life is as important as work on our outer life; have an open heart for the outer world's requirements; be true to a decision once made, even in the face of daunting adversity, as long as the decision is still valid; develop thankfulness for everything that meets us."

To be spiritual also is to believe in an inner, true self, i.e. the belief in duality. Then one believes in soul and an inner, spiritual reality - as opposed to the fleeting reality of mind, body and cosmos, our material world.

**One aspect of 'grasping reality' - of seeing things as they really are - is to be aware of modern animal-based food production. The state factory animals are kept in is horrific - being spiritual is to support animal liberation **.*

**An example of a group of people who 'grasped reality' is Die Weiße Rose, who saw that most citizens of Nazi Germany were ignorant of reality (see THE WHITE ROSE): "It is certain that today every honest person is ashamed of this government. Who among us has any concept of the dimensions of shame that will befall us and our children when one day the veil falls from our eyes and the most horrible of crimes reach the light of day?"*

"Though spirituality goes by many names, the experience itself is quite similar: It does seem to change people for the better ... they become more self-aware, self-accepting, self-forgiving. They seem to be more at peace with themselves, with the world and more at peace with others. They seem committed to living in a way - and leaving behind a legacy - that makes the world a better place. To be spiritual is the awareness everything you encounter - even the mundane - has the feel of the sacred, which may be why atheist have the capacity of being spiritual." After Steve McSwain

To be spiritual is to be intellectually honest, to be honest with yourself. Philosophy professor Thomas Metzinger says in a talk on this subject, "spirituality has nothing to do with high-level symbolic thoughts or concepts, it is something you cannot communicate through language - to be spiritual cannot be transmitted or taught. It is a specific form of self-knowledge. It happens in an instant, it is not a question of time - the first step is the last step".

go to page a25 in the appendix: Spirituality and Intellectual Honesty

***see also SINGER, UTILITARIANISM, VEGETARIAN*

STOPPING. "I stop before I eat. I don't mean to embarrass anyone, but I stop. It's not so much as a prayer, but a sort of commemoration of something else; I stop to remind myself to look for what is right, for the truth," said the actor William Hurt (1950 - 2022).* I also stop - not necessarily before a meal, but I may stop many times in a day. I stop my routine, my activity, my train of thoughts. I stop to engage in divergent, whimsical, random, contrary thinking. Stopping is like a mini holiday ... from predictability and the ordinary.

**interviewed by Nigel Farndale, SMH, Good Weekend, 13 May 2000
a period of stopping may morph into a stint of meditation*

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, SILENCE 2, STOICISM

WAR 4. It is my strong belief that war is wrong, always. A recurring line in my take on pacifism is that politicians and diplomats must make a serious effort to take actions that sidestep war, and to create circumstances that make war redundant. **B**ut jihadists cannot tolerate to live peacefully with nonbelievers of Islam. Their religion - their God - demands from them to fight infidels ... indeed to kill them. Jihadists believe in martyrdom; those who die in pursuit of holy war go to heaven. **T**his issue is a devilish conundrum for pacifists ... with no easy solution in sight.

see also HARRIS, ISLAM, JIHADISM, RELIGION 6 and pages a96: Jihadism, the Bright Line between Good and Evil as well as a97: This is why there is war in the Middle East see also page a96.3: What is Hamas thinking now? Hamas has no quarrel with Judaism

WAR / PEACE - CONSCIOUSNESS. War-consciousness - the view that wars sometimes are necessary, even useful - pervades our lives. We accept - or are oblivious to - that it is running our world. When we go to the movies, open the newspaper, turn on the tv or play a video game, what we are fed is often steeped in war-consciousness - with the result that many deem war inevitable, acceptable, fascinating, even alluring. In our archives war-consciousness manifests as technical manuals that dwell on engineering feats - or historic documents, in which famous battles are recounted, heroes celebrated and glorified. Countless movies tell the stories of our brave who are winning the fight to preserve our way of life. The message is that the 'just war' is worth the cost. **A**ustralia is said to have forged its sense of nationhood at Gallipoli, where young men proved their mettle. The battle was a massacre, but due to entrenched war-consciousness the tragedy has been elevated to a mythical status, with its annual celebration inducing war-imbued nationalism. The media offer documentaries - ostensibly to remember the fallen, but with the added incentive for patriotism and the war spirit being kept alive in the old and generated anew in the young. We are told not to forget. The dead? Well, surely. But why the militarism - the martial parades, the focus on battles? Will evoking past wars, glorifying won or lost fights and turning fallen soldiers into mythical heroes help prevent future wars? **H**istory and current events show that it will not. Thus war-consciousness overpowers peace-consciousness, the idea war is always wrong and must be avoided. However, this is what we must strive for; this is what our politics, entertainment and communications should be steeped in. We have to entrench in our minds the notion that our way of life must be preserved by peaceful means, not warfare. **T**he world wars of the twentieth century probably could have been avoided had peace-consciousness been developed during previous centuries; future generations will benefit from the peace-consciousness pacifists advocate this century.

*Peace is easily achieved.
First change the mind.
Then stop the shooting.*

Once more, one of my favourite quotes:

"I do not want to just end the war, I want to end the mindset that got us into war in the first place."

Barak Obama

Chris Hedges writes in his book WAR is a force that gives us meaning: "The myth of war is essential to justify the horrible sacrifices required in war, the destruction and the death of innocents. It can be formed only by denying the reality of war, by turning the lies, the manipulation, the inhumaneness of war into the heroic ideal."

"It is part of war's perversity that we lionize those great warriors and excuse their excesses in the name of selfdefense. We are humiliated in combat. The lofty words that inspire people to war - duty, honor, glory - swiftly become repugnant and hollow, replaced by the hard images of war. The rhetoric of patriotism is obliterated."

*see also WAR 2 as well as the footnote to WHY
and read my PACIFIST MANIFESTO
page a46 in the appendix*

WATER. Today I had an epiphany ... it was akin to a religious experience, a satori moment. I had in my hand a glass of water and I had a drink; the water tasted wonderful, sweet, delicious. It was just ordinary water ... nothing special, nothing added. But it was there; it came straight from the tap. I closed my eyes. I enjoyed this simple pleasure. A drink of clean water. A blessing. People ask, would you like a drink (they mean alcohol)? I say, no. I drink nothing but water (ok, and coffee); it's good enough for me. Every single person in the world should have access to clean water.

respect water ... make water your drink

WEAPONRY. Most agree that killing is horrible. So why do we fight wars? We invented weapons. Those weapons must be tested and improved, so they need to be used - and for many companies and nations they're a much counted-on source of income. Conflicts must be acknowledged - no sooner were humans equipped with mind than the existence of conflicts was assured *. But the presence of weaponry determines the methods conflicts are dealt with. Since guns are available, we consider their use the best means to solve conflicts. Yet, were we to abolish weapons, we would indeed still have conflict, but we would not have war. Many regimes rely on strong military for survival, and most governments manipulate their citizenry into believing that 'defence' - and its obscene costs - are an overwhelming necessity **. Thus the ruling forces - often under pressure from big business - resist a cutback of weaponry, for political and economic reasons. But once the world's colossal military spending is channelled into infrastructure and debt relief, the world has a chance for peace. To eliminate weaponry is in humankind's interest. To fight and kill will not lead to peace - rather to yet more fighting and killing.***

**see also CONFLICT*

"War is a racket. It always has been. It is possibly the oldest, easily the most profitable, surely the most vicious. It is the only one international in scope. It is the only one in which the profits are reckoned in dollars, and the losses in lives."

In his 1935 book War Is A Racket, Smedley Darlington Butler described the workings of the military-industrial complex. Butler was a Major General in the US Marine Corps and at the time of his death the most decorated Marine in US history.

*** The United States of America is the world leader in weaponry spending: "In the early two thousands, the USA accounted for only five per cent of the world population ... but just under half of all global military spending."*

"Another way of putting it is that the USA spent almost as much on defence as the other 190 countries of the world put together." Spoilt West invites its own Decline, Peter Hartcher, SMH, 13 June 2012

**** ... which is the idea, the weapons manufacturers think surreptitiously, while they call their industry 'defence'. The American singer & peace activist Jackson Browne said: "Going to war in the USA business elites are doing business, they're going to work."*

*see also page a24 in the appendix:
War Machine*

WHAT I BELIEVE. This is a corollary of the essays in this book - a summary of my life stance, if you will.

- believe there is no God, yet myriad ways to subscribe to a god-like energy; one as valid as any other (conditions apply*).
- believe the Truth is that all of the human race is one; hence we must treat all humans as equal and with kindness.
- believe there is a spiritual dimension, but the concept of spirituality must not divide humanity - as religions do.
- believe in a law that underlies and defines creation, and that this law allows for a universal consciousness.
- believe in meditation I connect with my true self, my spirit, which relates to the universal consciousness like a drop to the ocean.
- believe nothing is more vital than to live an ethical life, and that includes trying to fix what is wrong in the world.
- believe war is wrong and humans must abolish it, if there is to be a future for humankind in millennia to come.
- believe we must always strive for the truth, but we have to be prepared to adjust our understanding of it at any time.
- believe in humanism - a rational philosophy informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion.
- believe in tolerance, justice, freedom, pacifism, equality, love; while I loathe authoritarianism, indoctrination, control, manipulation.
- believe in keeping an open mind, allowing perceptions (and beliefs) to be changed, and to be uncertain about certainties.
- believe all beliefs are constructs of the mind - no belief has a holy, divine, non-secular provenance. Such beliefs are delusional.

So, how does the dictum: "believe nothing ... all beliefs are delusions", apply here? Good question.

'What I believe' were essays written by E. M. Forster and Bertrand Russell, advocating secular humanism.

Forster said, "I don't believe in creeds, but there are so many, one has to formulate one's own in self-defence."

Several other authors have written works with the same title, alluding to either or both of these essays.

**the conditions are:
every belief must be tolerant and non-violent
see also BELIEF*

I believe there is no God; yet, I always keep an open mind (maintain doubt ... don't be certain about anything!). So, am I an agnostic? No, I am an atheist. The chance there is no God is more than 99.99% - in mathematical, scientific and common sense terms that can be rounded up to 100%, based on the fact there is no proof for the existence of God.

*importantly, as ever, see my essays on GOD
especially GOD 1, as well as GOD 6*

Leo Tolstoy also published - in 1885 - a book with that name, where he distanced himself from organized religion, instead advocated adherence to the words in the Sermon on the Mount, attributed to Jesus Christ; another book written in his post-novelist, philosophical, religious late life was: The Kingdom of God is within You.

*also go to the appendix pages a47 and a48: Leo Tolstoy
and page a29: The Sermon On The Mount*

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 and 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, THREE THOUSAND, THE GREAT FILTER and the appendix pages a38 The Future is Now, a39 Humanity's Potential

WONDER. I see a cloud; I see the moon; I see a star, the Sun.
I see a tree; I see a leaf; I see a grain of sand, a shell, the beach.
In the distance sailing boats, the Manly ferry; water laps at my feet.
And I see that courageous mosquito, risking its life to suck my blood.
I see the things that make up the world around me; benign things,
all very familiar; all of them have to be there; all of them wonderful.
I think about the wonder of what's beyond ... the Earth, solar system, galaxy and universe. My mind wanders from the material to the ethereal. I lie on the sand, eyes shut; I ponder my place in the world.
How strange all this came about ... and how strange I am here.
My being here amazes me, but I'm glad to be here. As I contemplate meaning and purpose, I am content and grateful. It all is a wonder.

"And you realize how lucky we are. Lucky to be alive, to be breathing in this world of beauty ... where it's lucky to love and to be loved."

*Bruce Springsteen, in 'This American Life' by David Leser
SMH, Good Weekend, 31 October 2020*

see also GRATEFULNESS, HUMAN, MEANING

WORDS. One day the Polish-American philosopher Alfred Korzybski was giving a lecture to a group of students, when he suddenly produced a pack of biscuits wrapped in white paper. **H**e muttered that he just had to eat something, and he asked some students if they would also like a biscuit. "Nice biscuit, don't you think", said Korzybski, while he took a second one. **T**hen he tore the white paper from the packet to reveal they were dog biscuits. The students were shocked; two of them wanted to throw up and ran for the toilets. **Y**ou see", he remarked, "I just demonstrated that we do not only eat food, but also words - and that the taste of the former is often outdone by the taste of the latter." **H**is prank illustrates how some suffering originates from the confusion of linguistic representations of reality, rather than reality itself; one's perception of truth is not truth itself.

*Korzybski is famous for his remark:
"The map is not the territory",
a representation of his discipline of
General Semantics, meaning an abstraction
derived from something,
or a reaction to it, is not the thing itself.*

"One of the difficulties of thinking clearly about anything is that it is almost impossible not to form our ideas in words which have some previous associations, with the result that our thought is already shaped along certain lines before we have begun to follow it out. A word may have various meanings, and our use of it may deceive us into supposing that we were using it in some other sense." Milne.

*A. A. Milne, author of Winnie The Pooh
wrote the pacifist essay Peace with Honour
in 1934, between World Wars I and II;
it is about the nature of aggression and
the difficulty of establishing who is really
the defender and who is the aggressor.*

*"The word is a symbol of a fact, and for
us the symbol is far more important than
the fact - religiously and in every way."*

Krishnamurti, public talk ... 21 July 1964

XANADU 2.0 ... is Bill Gates' mansion of 66,000 sq. feet; The average size of an American home is 2,500 sq. feet. **O**n average, American families have less than two cars; Gates has a few, plus a collecting of Porsches, and four planes*. **C**limate change? He owns huge houses and flies in private jets; in fact ... Gates took one to Paris for the climate conference. **I**n 2021 Gates wrote a book, "How to avoid a Climate Disaster".

**two big jets as well as two small prop planes for local trips; one needs two each - one on standby, ready to be called on at a moment's notice ... the other undergoing maintenance.*

As to comparisons: Americans give on average \$737 p.a. to charity. Bill & Melinda Gates created the world's second largest charity, holding about \$50,000,000,000 in assets.*

**the largest is the Danish Novo Nordisk Foundation with an endowment of \$167 billion*

Xan-a-du

A metaphor for opulence, an idyllic place; it is the fictional estate of C. F. Kane, title character of the film Citizen Kane, a "stately pleasure-dome" in a city known for its splendour.

Bill Gates: "You will never solve climate change (CC) by asking people to consume less. I do not think it's realistic to say people will change their lifestyle because of concerns about CC. We can work together as we build technologies, businesses and industries to avoid the worst of climate change." Being a technologist, he has seen how innovation can change the world.

As an aside, Al Gore's An Inconvenient Truth of 2006, is a behavior-centered assessment of problem and solution: "Each one of us is a cause of global warming, but each one of us can make choices to change that." Well, Bill Gates never-the-less could be right, CC will not be solved by individuals changing their behaviour (that could be inconvenient - not using aircon?).

CC will be alleviated using advanced technologies. What does that mean for us in day-to-day terms? Intuitively most of us will always 'do what we can' to help diminish CC. But while our individual actions may have little impact, one thing we must do: vote for leaders who make the right decisions to reduce fossil fuel use ... in favor of renewables.

However, Bill Gates endorses a book: How the World Really Works, by Canadian environmental scientist Vaclav Smil: transitioning the world away from fossil fuels is much harder than it seems. Decarbonization by 2050 is now conceivable only at enormous cost, or with extraordinarily rapid transformations, and near-miraculous technological advances.

see also FUSION

YOGA. Yoga is an ancient Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh and Jain spiritual practice that may lead to insight into the true nature of being. Yoga asanas (postures) were developed to train the body to be still for meditation. **H**istorically, yoga was used to control the senses; the pausing of mental activity led to a supreme state. Yoga, yoga-related teachings and meditation are a path to the cessation of suffering and gaining of happiness. **N**owadays, in the West, yoga exercises keep our bodies nimble and in shape; yoga aids health and wellbeing. A few minutes of yoga practice every day helps one to be more flexible and in-tune with one's body and mind.

Yoga is dualistic: In the East it's a religious practice - in the West a form of exercise; either way yoga can aid our spiritual development, sharpen our senses and contribute to fitness and happiness. Yoga/exercise is a fountain of youth, a tool for stress relief. Yoga/meditation sets us on the path to enlightenment. As it helps us to empty our mind of thoughts - we can sidestep our ego.

Enlightenment is seeing the world the way it really is. Our ego prevents us from doing so. We don't see the real world, we see our world, with our biases ... and we are attached to this worldview. As we bypass ego in meditation, we gain a perception of reality that is untainted by our desires and favoritism; we are able to accept, detach and let go - which is a sure path to enlightenment.

YOUNG. Neil Young: I'm living with war - I'm living with war in my heart everyday - I'm living with war right now - And when the dawn breaks I see my fellow man - And on the flat-screen, we kill and we're killed again - And when the night falls, I pray for peace - Try to remember peace - I join the multitudes, I raise my hand in peace - I never bow to the laws of the thought police - I take a holy vow to never kill - To never kill again ...

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 convolution. 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. 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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**

To Do List for this life

support pacifism

spend time alone
in quietude,
think, meditate

think about death
- memento mori -

be guided by
rationalism
have a belief but beware truthiness

this to do list is from my book en.light.en.moment.carstenburmeister.com
do not fear to be eccentric with your opinions
do not strive for the truth - just abandon opinions
do not strive for the truth - just abandon opinions

LEARN TO LIVE
WITH CONFLICTS

show compassion

welcome egalitarianism

(... all human beings are equal)

study
various
philosophies
and religions

observe without judging

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

forgive

trust in
science

do not believe everything you read

**RAISE CHILDREN,
TEACH THEM WELL,
LEARN FROM THEM**

*expand your
consciousness,
become aware*

conduct your-
self ethically

**do
your
duty**

abide by the moral law
(the Golden Rule)

ACCEPT THE CONCEPT
OF HIGHER JUSTICE

of spirituality
true meaning
- explore the
be spiritual

BE FAIR

**love and
be loved**

be kind

ACKNOWLEDGE
OTHER TRUTHS

practice yoga

embrace zen

don't have
expectations
(adopt stoicism)

*be attached
to nothing*

*avoid killing
(go vegetarian)*

OPPOSE WAR

EXPLORE THE MIND

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 FOLLOW
A SYSTEM - OR A
LEADER. MAKE YOUR
OWN WAY. BE FREE.

*Ecce Homo:
How One Becomes What One Is.
Like Nietzsche, I put myself on trial with my work.
You be the judge ... is my work understood ? Does it matter?
Why then do I write ? I concur with those who say:
"I write to understand who I am." See p. a105*

To find out what is true, there must be a sense of aloneness. There must be freedom. You cannot travel very far if you are bound to something, like your country or your tradition. If you are bound to your ways of thought, if you are bound to a belief, if a certain activity holds you it's like being tied to a peg. If you want to find out what is true, you must break all tethers."

Jiddu Krishnamurti

My sense of social justice and responsibility always contrasted oddly with my pronounced freedom from the need for direct contact with other human beings and human communities. I gang my own gait, and I never belonged to my country, my home, my friends with my whole heart; in the face of all these ties I've never lost an obstinate sense of detachment."

Albert Einstein

Greatest of all is the one who can be the most solitary, the most hidden, the most different, the person beyond good and evil, the master of his virtues, the one with an abundance of will. **O**nly this should be called greatness. The ability to be just as multiple as whole; just as wide as full. I speak of a new breed of philosophers - they are outlaws, not agreeing with the majority."

Friedrich Nietzsche

*Krishnamurti, Einstein and Nietzsche are my archetypes *. Always reading, writing, searching ... for truth and meaning. As I said elsewhere, this leaves me little time to pursue relationships, or engage with traditions and customs; neither for a sense of belonging to any place or country.*

** see JUNG*

Appendix

*On the following pages is additional content accompanying my essays, content that is expanding constantly; as well as three pages with my **To Do List for this life** which can be removed and used as a fridge-chart or give-aways to friends and colleagues.*

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 about a dozen 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 ones do I relate to the most? Well, it's **EXISTENTIALISM** as well as **TRANSCENDENTALISM**. 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. On page XIV I evoke Jiddu **KRISHNAMURTI**, **Albert EINSTEIN** and **Friedrich NIETZSCHE** - men of great influence on me. 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 for 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.