

# 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 150 essays

*from Reality Hunger, a manifesto by David Shields*  
*\*see ECLECTICISM*

*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."*

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**CARSTEN BURMEISTER**

e-book  
paperback  
150 single-page essays

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

*Prologue*

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

**O**ne 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.

**T**o 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 500BCE*  
*see also FREE & PROSPEROUS*

**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 have 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); "*has anybody ever finished anything?*"\* (Leonardo da Vinci). Yet, I herewith hand my life's work over to you, dear reader. **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 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 copy and acquire with abandon, see ECLECTICISM, hence my book is 'open source' (conditions apply, see below\*\*). **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. **O**ne of Bertrand Russell's commandments (p. 110) is most pertinent in the context of my writings: "*Do not fear to be eccentric with your opinions.*" I cherish that idea of '*no fear*'; this 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). **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](mailto: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 are reading the 67<sup>th</sup> edition (a new edition every month or two). If you are keen you can trace the revisions on my website, go to ABOUT, then to BOOK REVISIONS.*

*\*\*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 blog / website as your source.*



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**ACCEPTANCE.** I got angry. I screamed and postured and I did a lot of damage in the process. All that has happened was meant to happen, nothing has happened that wasn't meant to happen. **We** find it difficult to accept this. If we learnt to accept, we would make the changes that are meant to be made and otherwise cope with inevitability; instead we get angry and do a lot of damage.

*But acceptance has nothing to do with fatalism.*

*Acceptance regards the past only. It is foolish to allow the notion of acceptance to impact one's outlook on the future; our decisions for the future must be guided by careful judgement.*

*So we must face reality and, for instance, accept the abuse that occurred in the past, but we shall not accept that it continues; it's important to recognise the point from when to accept no more.*

ac·cep·tance

*the realisation of a fact or truth, resulting in a person's willingness to come to terms with it*

fa·tal·ism

*the attitude of resignation and passivity resulting from the belief that one is powerless against fate*

*see also KARMA*

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**ALONE.** To be alone is important to me. I slow down. I think about my life; how the way I live my life affects others. **And** in meditation - which connects me with my refined, subtle being, my true self - I leave my life behind altogether. **But** being alone must not be confused with being lonely; being alone - in this sense - is an inner, spiritual experience. **Thus** alone is not a physical place; it does not need a church, mosque, temple or synagogue - it can be achieved anywhere. **A** companion to being alone is being still - to be still, in silence, calm and focussed likely will lead to experiencing inner peace. **Alone** and still, in a quiet spot, with my attention turned inward; now I have attained a space where I am safe and invincible.

*The concept of 'alone' is a great aid to practising detachment, but it also helps sharpen our senses and sensibilities in our daily life. As we engage in contemplation, introspection and mindfulness meditation, positive energies become available for self-healing, our passions as well as a quiet re-assessment of our priorities.*

con·tem·pla·tion

*focused consideration or observation of something*

in·tro·spec·tion

*self-examination of feelings, thoughts and motives*

mind·ful·ness med·i·ta·tion

*a technique to alleviate stress, sadness and anxiety*

med·i·ta·tion

*stilling of the mind to aid spiritual development*

*Being alone may coincide with 'having nothing to do' ... a state I cherish. Then, in contemplation, I will do the thinking that comes before the writing. When I am in this space of alone, still and calm with no time constraint, no self-imposed pressure to perform duties, I am in tune with my inner self, my creative spirit.*

*see also ATARAXIA, STILLNESS, WU WEI*

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

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

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

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

*Then we will acknowledge that - while we must learn from past mistakes - it is counterproductive to dwell on them; and the future - while careful planning is paramount - is unpredictable and if we overrate it, likely to cause anxiety. Thus the principle of living in the here and now is a requisite for happiness.*

see also HAPPINESS, Q&A  
STOICISM

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

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

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

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



painting by  
Chao Shao-ang

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

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

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

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



the nine-pointed Bahá'í star

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

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

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

*\*go to [universalhouseofjustice.bahai.org](http://universalhouseofjustice.bahai.org)*

**BALANCE.** Living in balance one experiences joy, without clinging to it. One endures sadness, without being overcome by it. One neither yearns the past, nor the future. One observes good or bad, without passing judgement. **L**iving in balance one is aware of the world's true nature. This awareness brings contentment without complacency, while inducing tranquillity without the loss of passion. **T**he challenge that remains is to find the balance between unwavering determination and cheerful surrender.

*Zeno (333 - 264 BC) founder of the Stoic school of philosophy: "Tranquillity can best be reached through indifference to both pleasure and pain."*

*see also* STOICISM

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

*\*see also HAPPINESS, MEANING*

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

*\*\*see also TRUTHINESS*

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

*see also BUDDHISM*

*Thus, as regards our own personal beliefs, an issue of great importance is in play. Beliefs are just that: Personal. We may try and find solace in the various belief systems prescribed by groups and tribes ...*

*... but the idea that having a belief involves group activities - as the various dogmatic religious beliefs do - is false. Our own deep, true beliefs are unassailable by outside influences, just as they can't be relayed to others.*

*see also UNDERSTANDING*

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

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

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

*Here is a curious story that shows a profound misunderstanding of the concept of belief. A pastor performed a service that included handling a rattlesnake - to demonstrate the veracity of a certain passage in the Bible.*

*"Anyone who believes can do it" he said. Only, he got bitten and died. You may say, that is a tragic story, what's curious about it? Well, his father - also a pastor - had died previously, performing the same stunt.*

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

*\*\*\*Believe nothing ... ok, true. But I'll say one thing: Our mind is designed for belief: beliefs are an incapable part of our mental fabric; and with so many destructive & intolerant beliefs, as a counter balance we need beliefs that are positive & supportive.*

*see also WHAT I BELIEVE, GOD 5*

**BLACK** lives in numbers. These are the statistics in respect of the status quo for Aboriginal Australians:  
**99** - deaths in custody, as per the 1991 Australian Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.  
**432** - the number of Indigenous Australians who have died in custody since the Commission's report.  
**2,481** - the number of First Nations adults in prison for every 100,000 members of the population.  
**164** - the comparable number for non-indigenous adults; 15 times as many Aborigines are imprisoned.  
**2%** - the percentage of Australia's adult population who are First Nations Australians.  
**28%** - the percentage of Australia's prison population who are First Nations Australians.  
**2015** - the year David Dungay Jr. was killed when prison officers held him face down on the floor.  
**Dungay** was screaming that he could not breathe; an officer said, "if you can scream, you can breathe".  
**Zero** - the number of successful homicide prosecutions of a death in custody in Australia's courts.

*In the wake of the 2020 killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis USA, Australia remembers its own history of black deaths in custody.* "Identity can pit us against each other; we form our tribes and we tear each other apart. How I wish we did not have to choose sides."

*Stan Grant (1963), a Wiradjuri man, journalist, ABC's Australian Indigenous and international affairs analyst  
SMH 6, 7 June 2020 ... also go to my blog 1046*

**BLACK LIVES MATTER.** And other lives too. The BLM movement in the USA is problematic; and most likely not as you think. Sam Harris has a podcast, CAN WE PULL BACK FROM THE BRINK? **Harris** turns to the issue of racism and police violence, and the issue is not straightforward. There surely are racist (as well as incompetent) cops, and incidents like George Floyd's killing are galling, but consider this: **Blacks** are 13% of the population ... however, they commit 50% of violent crimes; the majority of their victims are black; the story of crime in America is overwhelmingly the story of black-on-black crime. **But** there is distortion in the media: It's not showing us videos of white people killed by cops (twice as many as blacks \*); that the rate of police killings is down; that the crime rate is lowest in 25 years. Facts matter.

*\*50% of those killed are whites, 25% blacks; but since blacks are 13% of the population, proportionally they are killed twice as often. Go to my blogs 1051, 1049 and SamHarris.org; see also FACTFULNESS*

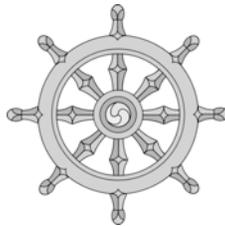
**BUDDHISM.** Siddhartha Gautama (563 - 483 BCE) was a spiritual teacher in India and the founder of Buddhism. He is recognized as the Supreme Buddha. However, the definition of Buddha extends to anyone who is awakened (enlightened); to disciples who have reached nirvana, a state of highest happiness. **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. **N**irvana is a condition free from desire, anxiety or anger. Once in nirvana, one lives in accordance with dharma. **M**editation is a great aid to attaining the state of nirvana.

en·light·en·ment

*Absence of greed, hatred & delusion; acceptance, detachment and understanding; recognition of reality, seeing the true nature of things.*

dharm·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 Dharma Wheel

*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 MEDITATION 3*

a·wa·ken

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

med·i·ta·tion

*Emptying the mind of worldly thoughts, which facilitates the bypassing of the ego, in order to aid our spiritual development.*

*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."*

*Moreover, Gautama Buddha stated that our attachment to the existence of a concept of self/soul - or indeed God - was pointless.*

**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 center 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 boys at their sister's birth.  
This book, my dear children, is for you.*

**COSMOS.** My favourite place to visit is vast. Astronomers measure its vastness by how far light travels in one year. Light moves quickly - one thousand million kilometres per hour - it could orbit Earth seven times a second; it traverses Sun to Earth in eight minutes and in a year it travels ten trillion kilometres (six trillion miles). **T**he cosmos is ninety billion light years across: about 500,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 miles. There are two hundred billion stars in our galaxy - the Milky Way - which is a hundred thousand light years in width. It is one of a hundred billion galaxies. There are billions of trillions of stars in the cosmos - and billions of trillions of planets. **I**f that is not enough - this is truly astonishing: Most of the universe is empty. The nearest star is four light years away - the nearest galaxies as far as a million light years. Were we randomly inserted into the cosmos, the chance we would end up on a planet is one in a billion trillion trillion, a one with thirty three zeros.

**T**he most compelling pictures from space are of nebulae - cosmic clouds of gas and dust - many of which measure several light years across. Dust particles at most are a tenth of a millimetre in size. Their density on Earth is a hundred particles per cubic centimetre - in space the density can be one particle per cubic centimetre or less.\* **H**ow can we humans get a perspective on the cosmos as regards our selves, our spirituality? Lao Tsu wrote in the *Tao Te Ching* (600 BCE): "There is a thing confusedly formed - born before heaven and earth - silent and void - it is capable of being the mother of the world - I know not its name - so I style it The Way." **T**he Way is Tao\*\* - the order of the universe. Everything in the world is an expression of Tao; furthermore, Tao is man's inner, divine power. In Taoism man is a microcosm for the universe. The *Upanishads*\*\*\* (800 BCE) reflect this view: "A little space in us is as great as the universe, and so the whole universe dwells in our heart."

*My reading list for cosmic armchair travellers: Cosmos - Carl Sagan; A Brief History of Time - Stephen Hawking (treat yourself to the illustrated edition); The Edge of Infinity, etc. - Paul Davies. This is my favourite cosmic picture book: The Invisible Universe - David Malin; and don't miss the tv series Wonders of the Universe with Brian Cox.*

*\*I am most fascinated with those cosmic dust clouds - the nebulae - simply because they make for such spectacular visuals, but I have to say it was tricky to find data about their consistency. The issue became much more clear in an email exchange with David Malin, astronomical photographer extraordinaire ([www.davidmalin.com](http://www.davidmalin.com)):*

*"A few dust particles are a tenth of a millimetre in size, most are a thousand times smaller, more like smoke than the dust of the desert ... its density can reach one particle per cubic centimetre - it does near the sun - but elsewhere it can be much lower (one particle per cubic kilometre) or one thousand times higher in a molecular cloud ..."*

*\*\*see also TAO*

*\*\*\*see also VEDANTA*

*furthermore, visit my blog 816*

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

*Richard Dawkins is the author of The God Delusion  
see also my blog 977*

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

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

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

**DUTY.** What is the meaning of life? To do our duty. What is our duty? To live in balance and by the law; to be peaceful, truthful and spiritual; to strive to work, with everything we do, toward the betterment of society; to look after family and community - and to teach our children their duties.

*see also* PURPOSE OF LIFE

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

*Some martial arts systems can be described as eclectic, in the sense that they borrow techniques from a wide variety of other arts. The martial arts method developed by Bruce Lee (1940 - 73), called Jeet Kune Do, is classified as an eclectic system.*

*Bruce Lee used to say: "Use what works for you, and take it from any place where you can find it."*

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

*Thus the concept of eclecticism also applies to my photoart as well as my approach to philosophy.*

*But eclecticism is eschewed by religions. Religions are rigid and not open to changes or influences from outside their doctrines. The knowledge inherent in religions is said to derive from revelation and ancient scriptures - inflexible and unalterable.*

*There is a famous - often mis-interpreted - quote by Pablo Picasso, "Good artists copy, great artists steal."*

*More from T. S. Elliot (I replaced 'poet' with 'artist'):  
"One of the tests of artists is how they borrow. Immature artists imitate, mature artists steal. Bad artists just deface what they take; good artists turn it into something different, something better."*

*Quintessentially eclectic, Reality Hunger 'a manifesto', by David Shields, is my new favourite book.*

*The publishers call it a "... rigorous and radical attempt to reframe how we think about 'truthiness',\* literary license, quotation and appropriation ..."  
"The subtitle of Reality Hunger 'a manifesto' is like calling a nuclear bomb a weapon ..." Don McLesse*

**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.*

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*\*see also TRUTHINESS*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*In a letter to Frederick II, King of Prussia, dated 5 January 1767, Voltaire wrote about Christianity: "Our religion is assuredly the most ridiculous, the most absurd and the most bloody religion which has ever infected this world. Your Majesty will do the human race an eternal service by extirpating this infamous superstition."*

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

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

*see also KRISHNAMURTI  
and Foreword pages VIII & IX*

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

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

*Enlightenment is an understanding of both the relative mode of existence (the way in which things appear to us) and the ultimate mode of existence (the true nature of these same appearances). This includes our own minds as well as the external world. (Matthieu Ricard)*

*Another definition for enlightenment is the absence of ignorance, delusion and indeed the self. Enlightenment leads to the attainment of nirvana, which brings the end of suffering.*

**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. **A**ll humans have the responsibility to live an ethical life; we must strive to be sincere and 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 for all - where freedom, peace (non-violence), prosperity, equality, respect and justice are guaranteed all humans. **T**hese issues must be valued above religious dogmas, customs, politics and arbitrary rules that may disadvantage those who seek to express their individual truths. **T**o live a virtuous, ethical life is a duty for everybody.

*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.*

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

*see also MORAL LAW, CONFUCIANISM  
and go to my blog 981*

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

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

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

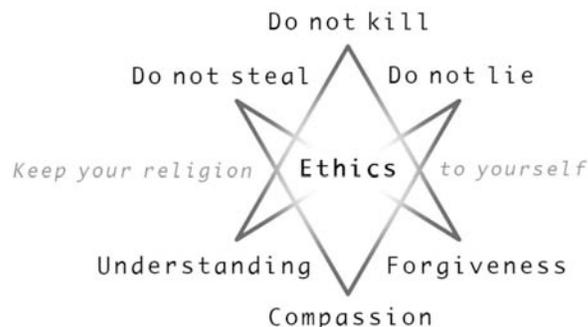
*Ethics, the moral principles governing our behavior, are secular, without need for religion.*

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

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

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

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



**FREE & PROSPEROUS.** How can we make our country less vulnerable to terrorist attacks? **W**e are a liberal society and protective measures can only be taken so far - beyond a certain point they will be intrusive, restrictive and intolerable. **T**hus - in reality - free and prosperous countries will always be vulnerable to 9/11-like attacks. **B**ut these attacks will end when the countries that breed terrorism are free and prosperous too.

*“If you want freedom, give others freedom - if you want prosperity, give others prosperity.”*

*The above is a version of the Confucian principle of Reciprocal Mutual Respect; it cultivates harmony.*

*Confucianism is an ethical philosophy that stresses the importance of moral development of the individual, so that society can be governed by moral virtue rather than the use of coercive laws and force. Confucius fostered human relationships in the context of humaneness - his teachings are imbued with Virtue Ethics\*.*

*Confucius believed social disorder stemmed from failure to perceive, understand and deal with reality. Confucius' concept of humaneness is expressed in the ancient Silver & Golden Rules: What you do not wish for yourself, do not impose on others. Expressed positively: We will provide to others what we want for ourselves.*

*\*Virtue Ethics*

*stress integrity rather than rules - you do what's right rather than what is dictated by tradition or law.*

*Confucius*

*was a 500BCE Chinese philosopher who emphasised morality, justice and sincerity in social relationships.*

*see also ENLIGHTENMENT 3  
CONFUCIANISM and my blog 798*

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

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

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

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

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

*But there is no evidence that an outer God - one who is on hand to have prayers heard and acted upon - exists. On the contrary, ample evidence of the non-existence of God are the daily killings of innocents in war zones.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

*When asked, 'do you believe in God?' the only reasonable reply is another question: 'What do you mean by God?'*

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

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

*see also GOD 4*

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

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

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

*The same applies to euthanasia, blood transfusions, stem cell research etc. One's religious belief may prohibit accepting treatments derived from advances due to stem cell research - this can be any person's choice. But again, this rejection should apply only to those whose belief in God imposes that constraint on them. Consider the example of vegetarianism: I am a vegetarian - it is my belief animals should not be slaughtered. But I would be considered rather an eccentric should I try to impose this rule as law on the wider community.*

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

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

*the full text of the essay is in the public domain  
go to my blog 935 and the appendix  
see also WISDOM*

**T**here is no God in scientific terms, but cardinal George Pell found a way to define 'alternative facts' and 'alternative science' to glibly debate this point ...

*... as you can see in the Q & A session on my blog 977. The then venerable cardinal was exposed as a paedophile and jailed in 2019. His historical arguments have been soundly trounced, namely in the 18th century Age Of Enlightenment - the Century Of Philosophy. It was then that reason replaced myth. However, those who adhere to his alternative facts & ancient concepts of science are still living in the dark, violent Middle Ages. It was in those medieval times that the dogma of God as fact & reality bedevilled people and led to religious wars.*

*go also to the appendix, blog 958  
and ENLIGHTENMENT 1*

**HOMELESS.** Our biggest problems aren't drugs,  
unemployment or crime - but homeless youth.  
**T**he disillusioned, homeless youth of today may  
be drug addicted, unemployed criminals tomorrow.

*What is the value of a society?  
To me its values are reflected  
in how it cares for its youth.*

**JAINISM.** Originating from India, Jainism is one of the world's oldest religions or philosophies, with over four million devotees. Jainism is rapidly expanding in the West. Jains stress spiritual independence and equality, and the obligation to be non-judgemental. Jains view God as the pure, eternal soul - which is described chiefly as Infinite Knowledge, Consciousness and Happiness. Jain philosophy emphasizes the necessity of every individual's effort to move soul towards divine consciousness and liberation. Jainism signifies every soul as potentially divine and advocates non-violence towards all living beings ... Jains are vegetarians. Jains don't believe in a supreme being, creator or manager, but rather in an eternal universe governed by natural laws. Jains have an ancient tradition of scholarship; they are India's most literate community, while their libraries are India's oldest. Jains have an understanding of Truth different to any other religion: truth is *not-one-sidedness*: one claim or another or both may be true. Jainism denotes non-violence as one's highest religious duty.

*The foundation of Jain philosophy is non-absolutism ('multiple points of view'). This philosophy allows Jains to accept the truth in other philosophies from their perspective and thus instill a tolerance for other viewpoints.*

*Jain scholars have devised methods to view both physical objects and abstract ideas from different perspectives simultaneously.*

*This search to view things from different angles leads to understanding and toleration of different, indeed even conflicting views. When this happens prejudices tend to subside and the tendency to accommodate increases.*

*see also THE TRUTH 3 and TRUTH*

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**JESUS.** Christians believe Jesus Christ to be the Messiah and through his crucifixion and resurrection humans can be reconciled to God and thereby are offered salvation and the promise of eternal life. Christ's teachings are found in the Gospel according to Matthew, namely the Sermon On The Mount; they emphasize compassion, love, humility, forgiveness and are the code of conduct for Christians.

*These tenets & beliefs nevertheless are universal, aspired to by most religions and civil societies.*

*However, the Christian faith - burdened with irrational, delusional dogmata - is bedeviled by duplicity and ignorance of its ideals.*

*Christianity has been in the forefront of many wars; in the past, millions of Christians were slaughtered by Christians who believed in a slightly different interpretation of the religion of love and compassion (Sapiens \*).*

*Many Christians pay only lip service to their virtuous calling; they may succumb to opportunism as they judge, exploit, vilify, condemn and persecute their fellow men.*

*Jesus is a greatly misinterpreted historical figure.*

*see also SCRIPTURE, my blogs 981 & 945 and the appendix  
\*Sapiens, a Brief History of Humankind, by Yuval Noah Harari*

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

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

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

see also ENLIGHTENMENT 2  
I often reference Krishnamurti  
go to my website ... click ABOUT  
at the top, click the link Krishnamurti



**"I don't mind what happens."**

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

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

With content from Jim Dreaver and Oliver Burkeman; for more, on my website visit /krishnamurti-references.aspx ... see also ACCEPTANCE

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

**L** - les·bi·an

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

**G** - gay

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

**B** - bi·sex·u·al

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

**T** - trans·gen·der

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

**T** - trans·sex·u·al

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

**T** - trans·ves·tite

*a cross-dresser, a person wearing clothes that are normally associated with the opposite sex*

**I** - in·ter·sex·u·al

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

**N** - non·bi·na·ry

*also genderqueer, pansexual; gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine*

**Q** - ques·tion·ing, que·ry·ing

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

**Q** - queer

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

**A** - an·dro·gyne

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

**H** - ho·mo·sex·u·al

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

**H** - her·maph·ro·dite

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

**L** - la·dy·boy

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

**C** - cis·gen·der, cis·sex·u·al, cis

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

*\* if you are in any way unsure about issues relating to the LGBT community go to my blogs 856, 858 and the appendix*

**MISSIONARIES.** At school I had to attend scripture classes. Once our teacher told a story about a missionary who came to a tribe that revered a god living in a tree. **H**e challenged the tribe thus: "If your god fails to stop me from cutting down your tree, will you then convert to my god?" **C**onfident in their faith the pagans agreed. Their god did not intervene and as a result they were coerced into Christianity. **I** stood up and asked: "If I tossed that cross to the floor and your god did nothing, would you stop believing in your god?" **T**he teacher told me to shut up and sit down.

*I don't remember this incident, but my mother used to tell me that one day, when I was about fourteen years old, I came home from school rather outraged, and I told her the above story. I excommunicated myself later that week.*

*At the same time in my life I became a pacifist. At school one day we were shown the based-on-a-true-story 1959 German (anti-) war movie, Die Brücke (The Bridge) by Bernhard Wicki. It impressed on me the horror and futility of war.*

**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." **I**s there a more practical answer? Yes, the Dalai Lama says: "Be happy." Other saints will tell you: "Know the Truth," while a philosopher may say "Know your Self" or "expressed in language, the query is meaningless." **W**hile pondering all this, you'll probably just raise a family and do your duty.

*see also* DUTY

**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 & 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.

*My essay GOD 6 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 = a supernatural agent, actively interested in the affairs of human individuals  
\*\*The medieval mystic Meister Eckhart (see GOD 2): "Man should be aware of the simple good God is; as I speak of God, I speak of the purity of the divine nature."  
see also BELIEF, FAITH, GOD 1, 2, 4, 6, INTERFAITH, RELIGION 1, 2, 3  
my blog 958 Belief vs Reality and the corresponding page in the appendix*

**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 this essay about reality, we shall make ourselves aware of the unchanging nature of consciousness and indeed spirit & soul.*

*see also CONSCIOUSNESS 1, DUALITY*

**STOICISM.** Stoicism is a Greek philosophy founded by Zeno (300 BCE). It views the world as pervaded by rationality. Stoics are critical of taboos and superstitions; they believe God equals reason or the law of nature. In Stoicism the chain of cosmic events is pre-ordained in every detail. However, the idea of 'fate' does not pre-empt our responsibilities for our actions - we remain liable for them, because we are their causes. Stoicism has just a few central teachings: It reminds us of how unpredictable the world can be; that our moment of life is brief; how to be steadfast, strong and in control of ourselves rather than succumb to destructive emotions. For Stoics adherence to virtues is all-important, as is one's sense of duty.

*A distinctive feature of Stoicism is its cosmopolitanism. In Discourses, Epictetus (AD 100) comments on man's relationship with the world: "Each human being is primarily a citizen of his own commonwealth, but he is also a member of the great city of men." This sentiment echoes that of Socrates, who said, "I am not an Athenian nor a Greek, but a citizen of the world."*

*Stoics like Seneca hold that external differences, i.e. rank and wealth, are of no importance. All people are manifestations of the one universal spirit and should live in brotherly love. Thus, Stoics advocate equality of all human beings and the brotherhood of humanity.*

*A stoic dictum: 'Work at what is before you with no distraction, expect nothing, be satisfied to live in harmony with the natural way of things - and you'll be happy.'*

*More stoic aphorisms: 'Freedom is secured not by the fulfilling of desires - but by detachment from desire.'*

*'If you are distressed by something, it is not this thing which disturbs you - but your own judgment about it.'*

*And my favourite: 'How ridiculous and how strange, to be surprised at anything that may happen in life.'*

*Another favorite is: 'What counts in life are not our circumstances - but how we deal with our circumstances.'*

*One more: Learn to change what can be changed, to accept what can't be changed and to know the difference.*

*Marcus Aurelius, a stoic and a Roman Emperor (121 - 180), wrote Meditations. One advice in his book is not to be upset by the misdeeds of others, to correct them if possible ... but if they would not change their ways, to accept them.*

*In reacting to such people, we must never allow our own principles to be violated; we should not be surprised by the wickedness of others, and avoid wishing men are not as they are, because then we are wishing for the impossible.*

*Marcus left us an indelible rhetorical device: The story has it that in Roman times an emperor who conducted a successful campaign of pillorying & conquering would lead - on his chariot - a triumphant procession through the streets of Rome. Marcus then had a slave whisper in his ear: "Memento Mori" (Remember you are mortal).*

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sto·i·cism

*patience and endurance shown in the face of adversity*

sto·i·cal

*self-control, resilience and detachment allow Stoics to become clear, level-headed and unbiased thinkers*

Sto·ic

*a member of the Greek school of philosophy that asserts happiness can be achieved by accepting life's ups and downs as the product of unalterable destiny*

see also BALANCE

**THE FUTURE 2.** What does the future hold for humanity? This question is closely linked to another: Where are all the aliens? (The Fermi Paradox). There is the theory of the five filters, culminating in the Great Filter. The first was passed when life came into being as single cells. The second was overcome when those primordial living things merged and developed into higher-level, multi-cell organisms. **The** third filter is for those life forms to evolve and to grow into sophisticated beings ... on par with the animals we know today. Conquering the fourth filter means for one of those species to rise above the rest, to develop intelligence and dominate all other beings. This is the phase humans are in and it is possible some civilizations had before been at that very point of development in our galaxy. **The** fifth filter - the Great Filter - is the stage humans are facing and it is distinctly possible it will doom us, as it apparently has doomed any other culture that may have existed in the past. It seems no civilization previously has been able to overcome it ... since we cannot find any aliens. Pay attention now: This is what causes human-like beings to self-destruct: Growth depletes the planet's resources and their habitat is destroyed. **So** this fate - other than falling victim to asteroid collisions - likely befell any alien culture that existed before us ... their technologies may have pushed the limits too far. They may have caused catastrophic climate change; built weapon systems that got out of hand or created bio-engineered entities and / or Artificial Intelligence (AI) that decided their creators stymied their progress and had to be terminated. **If** - however - an advanced civilization managed to overcome the Great Filter and they will visit us, it could be disastrous for humanity, since it is likely the aliens - or an AI civilization that had replaced their human-like creators - would aim to conquer our planet and use it to replenish their own resources (as we would theirs) ... with fateful disregard for the wellbeing of the human species. **But** perhaps there aren't - and never were - any aliens ... we are alone.

*I would like this essay to be read not as a doomsday scenario, rather it is a warning to humanity, to our politicians, leaders and other influencers: Beware technology ... do not let it get out of hand, and counteract Climate Change & Global Warming.*

*go to the appendix and blog 941 with the videos  
Why Alien Life Would Be Our Doom  
Where Are All The Aliens?  
by KURZGESAGT.org  
go also to blog 943*

*see also THREE THOUSAND*

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*In Stephen Hawking's 2018 book Brief Answers to the Big Questions is a chapter Will Artificial Intelligence Outsmart Us? ... says he: "Success in creating AI would be the biggest event in human history."*

*"Unfortunately, it also may be the last, unless we learn how to avoid the risks ... I fear the consequences of creating something that can match or surpass humans ... that could develop a will of its own."*

**THE ROLLING STONES.** In 1964 - when I was seventeen years old - my parents sent me on a study tour to London; my school-English was so bad, my teacher used to yell at me, "Burmeister, you'll never in your life speak a word of English!" So off I went; and I had a task: I was playing in a school band and we covered hit parade songs - my task was to bring back the latest Beatles record. That day the guy in the record shop did something to me: "The Beatles, sure - but listen to this..." He put on the first Rolling Stones album - and *Route 66*, *Carol*, *Can I get a Witness*, *Now I've got a Witness*, *Walking the Dog* were the first songs of what would come to be the soundtrack to my life; though I soon traded my drum kit for a camera. The Stones: The blues, the rock, the country, the soul, the thrill. That honky-tonk voice; those biting, insane guitar riffs; the cool, inspired drum beats. Mick, Keith 'n Ronnie (& Brian, Bill, Mick), inimitable Charlie; only Bob, Jimi, Miles, Ludwig v. compare ... *but they're dead.*

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

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

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

*Once, while on tour, a drunk Jagger phoned Watts in the middle of the night and asked, "where's my drummer?" Charlie got up, shaved, dressed in a suit, put on a tie and freshly shined shoes, descended down the stairs and punched Mick in the face, saying: "Don't you ever call me 'my drummer' again; you're my fucking singer!"*

**THE WHITE ROSE.** *Die Weiße Rose* was a nonviolent resistance group in Nazi Germany, created by students from the University of Munich and their professor. **T**he group became known for an anonymous leaflet campaign that lasted from June 1942 until February 1943. It called for active opposition to German dictator Adolf Hitler's regime. **T**he six core members of the group were arrested by the Gestapo on 18 Feb 1943 - three of them tried, convicted and executed by beheading on 22 Feb 1943. All were noted for the courage with which they faced their deaths, particularly Sophie. **A**t the time their actions were dismissed as anti-national. Today The White Rose are honoured as great heroes.



*Die Weiße Rose were students Sophie Scholl, Hans Scholl, Alex Schmorell, Willi Graf, Christoph Probst, Inge Scholl and professor of philosophy, Kurt Huber. They had witnessed the atrocities of the war, rejected militarism and believed in a tolerant, federated Europe.*

*"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?"*

*Adapted from the first leaflet of The White Rose*

*Sophie's final words were either: "Your heads will fall as well" or: "God, you are my refuge into eternity." In the film Sophie Scholl, The Last Days her last words were: "The sun still shines". The last words of Hans Scholl were: "Es lebe die Freiheit!" (Long live freedom!)*

*Leaflet 4's concluding phrase, which became the motto of The White Rose resistance, was: "We will not be silent. We are your bad conscience. The White Rose will not leave you in peace." 'We will not be silent' is a T-shirt in many languages - in protest of the Iraq war.*

**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.

*'What I believe' were essays written by E. M. Forster and Bertrand Russell, advocating secular humanism. Several other authors have written works with the same title, alluding to either or both of these essays. Forster said, "I don't believe in creeds, but there are so many, one has to formulate one's own in self-defence."*

*\*the conditions are:  
every belief must be tolerant and non-violent*

*see also BELIEF*

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*I believe that there is no God; yet, I believe in keeping an open mind ... so, does that mean that I am an agnostic? No, I am an atheist. I believe the chance that there is no God is more than 99.99 %, which - in mathematical and purely scientific terms - can be rounded up to 100%; based on the fact that there is no proof for the existence of God.*

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*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, with blog 938 Leo Tolstoy and 945 The Sermon On The Mount*

**WHY.** I have three elementary questions on my mind:  
**F**irstly, why is there something rather than nothing?  
**S**econdly, why is there the delusional belief in a God?  
**T**hirdly - and most urgently - why do we have wars?  
**T**here are no easy answers ... but we must keep asking.

1. asked by the 17<sup>th</sup> century German philosopher Leibniz
2. in this context read Richard Dawkins' The God Delusion
3. Krishnamurti talks about this issue, go to my blog 803

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 in 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 underlying credo of religions is the belief the creation was created for a purpose, namely the doctrine their God is the creator and the ruler over His disciples' lives.

see also EXISTENCE, FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE

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

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

\*see also GOD 4, 6  
RELIGION 3  
BELIEF

see also SCRIPTURE  
WAR, WEAPONRY  
UNITED NATIONS

*Homo sapiens evolved 200,000 years ago. For the past 200 years - the age of the Industrial Revolution - we developed technologies that - combined with fundamentalism - have the potential to destroy humanity ... unless we foster a new age of Enlightenment.*

see also CONFLICT, ENLIGHTENMENT 1, FACTFULNESS,  
THREETHOUSAND, THE FUTURE 2 and my blogs 1001, 1052  
as well as the corresponding pages in the appendix

**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 that 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.*

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**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. **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

be spiritual Live in balance

LEARN TO LIVE WITH CONFLICTS

spend time alone in quietude, think, meditate

*think about death*  
**support pacifism**

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

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

*expand your consciousness, become aware*

have a belief (but beware truthiness) **our duty**

abide by the universal law (the Golden Rule)

- explore the true meaning of spirituality

**love and be loved**

ACKNOWLEDGE OTHER TRUTHS  
*practice yoga*  
embrace Zen

ACCEPT THE CONCEPT OF HIGHER JUSTICE

*be attached to nothing*  
*avoid killing (go vegetarian)*

don't have expectations (adopt stoicism) **OPPOSE WAR**

**EXPLORE THE MIND**

**examine reality - get real**

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

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