

# Spiritual Soup

Kurt Venables

## Mirrors



I was down at the Y working out the other day. It's the first week of the new year, and there's always a wave of newly resolute faces plugging away on the treadmills, bikes, and machines. Unfortunately, the new faces seem to dwindle as the weeks progress. The free weight room, where I spend most of my time working out, doesn't seem to get as many new faces. The weight room seems reserved for diehards who actually enjoy laboring under crushing weights. The sensation of chalk dust, real dust, and a peculiar musty smell is accompanied by grunts and faces distorted with grimaces. Heaven or hell? A little of both perhaps.

My face was distorted for another reason on that workout day. The walls are covered in mirrors, one was cracked, and near it hung a sign, "Warning: Mirror Cracked." As I looked at it, with the cracks running across the reflection of my face, I saw a disjointed view of myself and reality. I thought this was an apt metaphor for some important spiritual concepts.

The mind is a mirror of reality. The aim of the rational mind is to infer generalizations that accurately describe reality, to grasp truth about the world around us. A mind that is whole and clear resembles a like mirror, reflecting reality in exquisite detail. Unfortunately, many of us construct sometimes elaborate edifices of self deception- we lie to ourselves. Why? Many reasons, perhaps the most important being a misguided effort to preserve self esteem. Instead of addressing problems with ourselves and working through them,

sometimes we simply pretend the problems don't exist, ignore them, and hope they will go away. They don't, of course.

Two of the most important self deceptions are arrogance and what I call the delusion of omniscience. With arrogance, people attempt to artificially inflate their self esteem by thinking they are "better" than others. People extend the logic, thinking that this entitles them to be selfish and that they deserve more "things" than others. With the delusion of omniscience, people convince themselves that they basically already know everything. Rather than putting forth the effort to think and continually learn new things, it is easier to just believe you already know everything. This also engenders an artificial sense of security (nothing bad can happen if you know everything about the world around you) and self esteem.

Self deceptions, of course, are extremely harmful. They mask problems and make spiritual progress nearly impossible. Without an open and clear mind, significant learning is unlikely. In addition, self esteem is built far more effectively by facing problems and working through them. The mind of one who harbors substantial self deceptions is like a cracked mirror, reflecting a distorted view of oneself and reality.

There is another mirror of note, the mirror of the soul, and the mirror of the mind is connected to the mirror of the soul. In fact, they are two sides of the same mirror. The heart, or soul, reflects the Light within. The Light is the pure love that burns within each of us. If the mirror of the soul is whole and pure, it reflects the Light truly. If it is cloudy or cracked, the Light's reflection is dim or distorted. The mind's beliefs affect one's ability to open one's heart to the Light, and the pureness of one's heart affects the mind's ability to grasp truth. The two are interconnected. They are two sides of the same mirror. If the mirror of the mind is cloudy and cracked, so too will be the mirror of the soul.

So we must clear our minds of self deceptions. No thought can be "off limits". We must face our problems and work through them. With an open mind, committed to truth, we can begin to make spiritual progress and allow the Light to fill

our hearts. It has been said that the eyes are the windows or mirrors of the soul. Lines in Matthew discuss the eye and the light:

<sup>19</sup>Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

<sup>20</sup>But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

<sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

<sup>22</sup>The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

<sup>23</sup>But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

Matthew, Chapter 6 (King James)

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