

Spiritual Soup

By Kurt Venables

The Power of Truth



I have described spirituality as a search for truth accompanied by spiritual action (actively changing feelings). This is the spiritual process, and learning the process is perhaps even more important than the substantive discoveries to be made on the journey. As the saying goes, “Give a man a fish, and he will have a meal; teach a man to fish, . . .” This truism underscores the overriding importance of developing skills related to the process of acquisition. Here, I present further detail regarding my views on the first aspect of the spiritual process- the search for truth.

First, for a person to begin and successfully continue the search for spiritual truth, he or she must understand the power that truth can have in his or her life. Technologically, we are all familiar with the wonders that the application of scientific knowledge has wrought in our lives. The same is possible for spiritual truth, which is knowledge of our subjective world, knowledge of our mind and hearts (as opposed to scientific knowledge of the objective world around us). Applying spiritual knowledge to our lives can bring great happiness. Ultimately, spiritual knowledge has even greater potential to bring true happiness than scientific knowledge. It’s just that in our culture spiritual knowledge is underappreciated and underutilized.

Secondly, open-mindedness is absolutely fundamental to a credible search for knowledge. Those who think they already have all the answers will unfortunately never

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learn the important things in life and are doomed to repeat their mistakes. This characteristic is common. We call such people “Know it alls.” I’ll bet you know one or two. In truth, most people have, or at one time have had, at least some “Know it all” in them. This is no crime, but to make spiritual progress, this limitation must absolutely be overcome.

One factor contributing to “Know it all” syndrome is that it feels good to believe that you have all the answers, that you fully understand your world, because it imparts a sense of security. This aspect is actually easier to overcome than the next I will mention. Here, one must come to realize that understanding your world is a continuing process and that omniscient self-deceptions only subvert the endeavor.

The most pernicious piece of mental gymnastics surrounding this subject is arrogance. Here is my view of arrogance: I believe that people have an innate concept of social hierarchy that arises in selfish environments. An innate concept of equality pervades in loving environments, but the selfish see hierarchy in social

situations. The thought process of arrogance is that some characteristic valued by society (intelligence, athleticism, attractiveness, etc.) makes a person “better” than others without this attribute, entitling the “better” person to a higher social status and a greater share of resources. Thus, arrogance yields a justification for selfishness. Of course, no one is “better” than another. In order to support the belief that they are better, the arrogant frequently engage in sometimes elaborate self-deception, exaggerating their good qualities and minimizing the good qualities of those around them. Apart from being highly destructive from a social standpoint, self-deception is poison to any credible search for self-knowledge. The whole point of spirituality is to identify weaknesses, obstacles to happiness, and overcome them. Since admitting limitations is anathema to maintaining arrogant self-delusions, arrogance is completely inconsistent with spiritual progress. The bottom line is this: ***Humility is the key to spirituality.***

From a broader perspective, ***the truth is the truth- it is not a question of what you want to believe.*** Spiritual truth is a form of knowledge, and knowledge consists of

generalizations, inductive insights, based upon observations. In spirituality, the subject of the observations and insights is the mind and heart. This does not reduce the necessity for knowledge to be consistent with and supported by introspective observation. Arrogance is self-serving deception; it is not supported by observation. Everyone needs others; no one can stand apart from others. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses; diversity is what makes a group strong. In addition, arrogance is inconsistent with feelings of love, which are essential for true happiness. In short, arrogance is a lie, and ***the worst lies are the ones you tell yourself.*** I liken building a world view based upon self-serving delusion to building a house entirely of glass: It is utterly transparent to those on the outside. Because the harsh winds of change in life frequently throw up objects that chip and break the panes, it requires a lot of maintenance to keep up. In the most unfortunate circumstances, when subjected to extreme harshness, it will shatter and fall.

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