

A forum to encourage independent thinking

The THINK Club

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TRUTH WILL TRIUMPH

Eastern Philosophy Myth and Reality

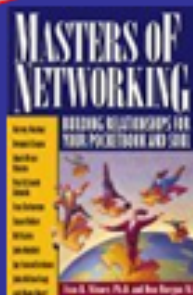
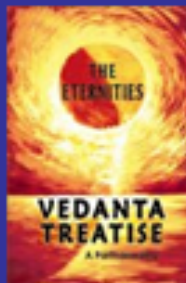
"In the end
These things matter most:
How well did you love?
How fully did you live?
How deeply did you let go?"

— [Siddhārtha Gautama](#)



सत्यमेव जयते

Book
Reviews



Inside:
Reason or Religion?
Twains Shall Meet
Wanda Meets God

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Letters

I liked 'Umang Is the Word.' It is hilarious!
Spriha Srivastava
New Delhi, India

Read your nice article on 'My Name Is Khan.'
Here are my views and some facts.

Movies in India are largely financed by underworld and controlled by Karachi. 'My Name Is Khan' was Mr. Johar's attempt to oblige them. To make the movie hit, he and Shahrukh very cleverly manipulated sentiments of the Muslim community, got Shiv Sena to declare a ban on it by making shrewd pronouncements, and raked in money on the first three days globally. I made a point not to see the film.

Ashok Lal
Pune, India

I just completed reading the derivatives and Khan articles. Both were written outstandingly - I compliment you on your witty articles. Thanks for sharing it all with so many of us. I loved the ending of the derivatives articles - how do you know the views of both men and women and put it in an article?

Madhu Khare
Alexandria, VA

'My Name Is Khan' (The Think Club, Spring 2010) is an eye opener. I recommend everyone to read that article.

Charlie Hall
Fenton, MI

Your editorial on basics of management (The Think Club, Spring 2010) is a timely reminder to the managers all over the world. It's time to put fundamentals over the hype. Well presented!

David Holt
London, England

Thinking Wildly

What is the difference between a religious authority and a terrorist? You can negotiate with a terrorist!

My biggest fear is that someday I will meet God and He will sneeze and I will not know what to say.

How many charismatics does it take to change a light bulb? One to change the light bulb and one to cast out the spirit of darkness.

Question: What did the sign in the window of the yoga master searching for a new disciple say? Answer: Inquire within!

What did the Zen master say to the hot dog vendor? "Make me one with everything."

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Reason or Religion?

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

There is a difference between religious beliefs and reasoning. Religion inhibits reasoning. It mandates us to believe in a book or a prophet and follow them blindly without questioning their authority. Reasoning, on the other hand, may require independent thinking. It lets us use our intellect to discriminate between what is logical and illogical. Religion is extrinsic, reasoning is intrinsic. It is self knowledge that comes from within.

All religious mandates (not the essence) are based on rhetoric that aims at supporting a claim. That is, it offers considerations meant to persuade us to accept their claim. They are based on pseudo reasoning such as if we do not go to the church on Sundays, we will go to hell. The arguments are full of fallacies as it does not provide us with the justification to accept the argument.

The religious authorities try to control us with argument from outrage. Saying that one who does not believe in their Holy book or accept their prophet as the savior is infidel is a prime example of hyperbole, dysphemism and innuendo.

Another rhetoric used by organized religion is scare tactics. The concept of heaven and hell or arguments such as 'if you do not fast on Thursdays, something bad may happen to your children' are excellent examples of these types of arguments.

The religious pundits also use 'apple polishing' to appeal to our vanity. Sayings like, 'Mr. Smith led a successful life because he gave millions to the church' tries to give validity to fallacies.

The most common rhetoric used in religion is 'guilt trip.' It elicits feelings of guilt inside us for things that do not go in our favor. As a result we accept 'wishful thinking' because we want to prove that things went wrong or a tragedy happened because we may have done bad karma in our past lives.

Once the religious figures organize enough people to support them, they start using 'peer pressure' on us to accept their mandate. Going along with crowd inspires fallacies and we accept

reaction of others as our own reasoning. The 'group think' fallacy lets us join the fraternity where we get the needed social support. This gives rise to powerful emotions that can justify, burning the widows, child sacrifice, mass killing and terrorism. Unfortunately, everything can be justified in the context of religion.

While religion is based on blind faith, reasoning comes from intellect and a sound argument. Any argument has two sides, premises and conclusion. We must test any argument by dividing them in those two parts and then determining if the statement is valid, invalid, true or false.

It is important to keep in mind that in philosophy, we use "argument." To get us to believe something, philosophers give us reasons – we call them premises: a set of claims that are supposed to show us why something (referred to as the conclusion) is true. Premises and conclusion together make an argument. The premises of an argument are supposed to support, or give us reason(s) for believing, the conclusion.

To evaluate an argument, the first thing we need to notice is what type of argument it is. There are two main types of arguments: inductive and deductive. Inductive arguments try to give us reason to believe that something is probably true, or most likely true. Here's an example of an inductive argument:

Premise 1: Misery is the result of bad karma in the past life.

Premise 2: Mr. X is miserable.

Conclusion: Mr. X did bad karma in his past life.

Notice that though the above argument is valid because the premises support the conclusion, there is no way of proving that the premises are true. Unfortunately, most of us fall prey to the validity of the argument without examining whether the argument itself is true or false.

While inductive arguments merely try to show

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Religion and Philosophy According to Hinduism

Excerpts from Sri Nikhilanada Introduction to 'Self Knowledge'

In Sanskrit, philosophy is called darsana, derived from the root dris meaning *to see*. The purpose of philosophy is to enable its students to see Truth directly. Therefore, with the Hindus, philosophy is not a mere intellectual pursuit of an abstract ideal, but the actual perception or realization of Truth. In the West, especially since the beginning of the modern era, philosophy has been divorced from religion. The result seems to have been disastrous for both. But Hindu thinkers have always maintained a close alliance between the two. The one is incomplete without the other. The goal of philosophy may be Truth, and the goal of religion, God; but in the final experience God and Truth are one and the same Reality.

Religion insists on faith; philosophy emphasizes reason. These are two functions of our thinking mind and, if followed sincerely, often cross each other's path. The ultimate experience of Truth may be an act of faith, but its validity is judged through reason. Truth may transcend reason, but it is never illogical. One may not be able to arrive at Truth exclusively through reason, but one's experience and statement of Truth cannot be valid if they contradict reason. A direct experience that destroys one's doubts and is followed by an inner reassurance and peace is the ultimate proof of Truth, in the realization of which both faith and reason play vital parts. Religion without philosophy tends to become dogmatic, superstitious, and jejune. Philosophy without religion degenerates into inane and dry intellectualism. Reason moves in a circle, creates doubt, and never arrives at finality; it may indicate the possibility, nay the probability, of an Ultimate Reality, but if not animated by faith, it makes its user an agnostic.

Religion, in which emotion plays an important part, becomes mere sentimentalism if it is not strengthened by the fiber of philosophy. It is the practical application of philosophy to life, and philosophy supplies it with an unshakable foundation. Religion supplies the aspirant with feeling or passion, and philosophy prevents him from wandering into dark alleys or up dead ends. Therefore the Hindu seers harmonized, in Vedanta, both religion and philosophy,

faith and reason; and this fact accounts for its adequacy and universality. A true philosopher has something of the spirit of awe, adoration, and reverence cherished by a religious person; and a truly religious person is not without the intellectual understanding and insight which are the chief characteristics of a philosopher.

It is important to note that whenever religion has emphasized mere forms and dogmas, and thereby clouded men's vision regarding Truth, philosophy has raised its voice in protest and corrected the errors of religion. Thus, the Upanishads and the teachings of Sankara may be regarded as protests of philosophy against the excesses of religion. But the Hindu philosophers recognized the importance of religion and never discarded it altogether.

Essence of Hinduism: Quotes from 'Self-Knowledge' by Sri Sankaracharya

As fire is the direct cause of cooking, so knowledge, and not any other form of discipline, is the direct cause of liberation; for liberation cannot be attained without knowledge.

Action cannot destroy ignorance, for it is not in the conflict with ignorance. Knowledge alone destroys ignorance, as light destroys dense darkness.

It is only because of ignorance that the Self appears to be finite. When ignorance is destroyed, the Self, which does not admit of any multiplicity whatsoever, truly reveals Itself by Itself, like the sun when the cloud is removed.

Though the all-pervading Atman (self or soul) does not shine in everything, it is manifested only in the buddhi (intellect), like a reflection in clear water or in a stainless mirror.

I am verily that Supreme Brahman, which is eternal, stainless and free; which is one, indivisible and non-dual; and which is of the nature of Bliss, Truth, Knowledge and Infinity.

Wanda Meets God

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

Wanda is the only person I know who has seen and met God. It was not a planned meeting but an accident. Wanda was visiting North Pole in New York state trying to steal a few dollars from the visitors while she got stuck on the frosty refrigerated ice columns. At the same time a fish named Wanda was also stuck at a North Pole glacier. Wanda the fish being very religious prayed to God for many hours (months in terms of human life). Her prayer was so effective that God decided to go to North Pole and rescue Wanda. It so happened that God came to North Pole, NY by mistake and rescued Wanda, the thief.

Being an antagonist and not knowing who the bearded old man in the white cloak was, Wanda asked Him, "Who are you?"

"I am God," the old man answered.

"Whose God are you?" Wanda asked genuinely.

"What do you mean?" answered God

"What I mean to ask is are you Muslim's Allah, Christian's God, Hindu's Brahma, Vishnu or Shiva or are you from some other denomination? Asked Wanda.

God seemed perplexed at Wanda's question and asked, "Where did you get these ideas from?"

"From your agents! The brokers of religion," Wanda continued, "as a matter of fact, aren't you their creation like ET is a creation of Spielberg?"

"See Honey! There is a fundamental difference between ET and me. ET cannot provide or create. I create, provide and even can destroy."

"I don't believe you," replied Wanda, "if you were that smart, how come there are so many flaws in your creation. Why am I not as beautiful and sexy as a Victoria Secret's model?"

"It's not my fault," God defended Himself, "it is because you eat too much and, as a result, you are fat. Moreover, you do not apply any makeup like they do."

"This is contrary to what I hear. I hear that God is in everything including food, so more I eat, the godlier I should get."

"See Honey, I do not have an answer for everything. That's why I created the brain and delegated the authority for thinking to that organ, so think; the answer is within you."

"I don't want to think. Thinking is very painful. Therefore, I have delegated that to the pundits on television and to your appointed protectors and interpreters of religion.

"I did not delegate any such function to anybody." God seemed irritated.

"I will only believe you if you can give me some clear sign," replied Wanda.

"What kind of clear sign do you want?"

"Can you deposit ten million dollars in my name in a Swiss bank?"

God was getting impatient. He said to Wanda, "I came to earth to rescue a fish. But you do not look like a fish. You look different," God asked.

"I am not a fish. I am a woman," answered Wanda.

"Is this not North Pole?" God asked.

"Yes, this is North Pole, NY, but you are, probably, looking for the real North Pole. The best bet for you is to go to Sarah Palin's house in Alaska. You can actually see both Russia and the North Pole from there.

"Thank you for the direction, Wanda." God was about to disappear.

Wanda shouted, "One last question God! If I see you again and should you sneeze at that time, what should I say?"

God had already left.

Hinduism Reflects Unity in Diversity

By Madhurendu Bhushan Kumar, Ph.D.

The Hindu religion or Hinduism is uniquely rich in philosophy and scriptural literature. It has a multiplicity of deities, scriptures and sects, yet it is centered around One God, Supreme Being or Brahman which pervades the entirety of the universe. God is portrayed as the creator and the creation or the maker and material of the universe, beyond which nothing exists. As Sivaya Subramuniya swami observed, "Hinduism, the oldest religion, has no beginning - it predates recorded history. It has no human founder. It is a mystical religion, leading the devotee to personally experience the Truth within, finally reaching the pinnacle of consciousness where man and God are one. This is the ultimate goal of Hinduism - Union with God or Moksha. All souls are evolving toward union with God. Not a single soul will be eternally deprived of this destiny. Thus, spiritual knowledge and experience is the essence of this religion". The scriptures present a multiplicity of approaches to divinity (Karma Yoga, Gyan Yoga, Raj Yoga and Bhakti Yoga).

Why So Many Gods ? As described in the Hindu scriptures, God is one, and has many names as well as many forms. The existence of god is discerned through His manifestations of which the visible world is an integral part. The underlying principal of Hinduism is the endless cycles of existence of the universe from the phase of creation through the phases of preservation and dissolution leading to the repeated process of creation. God as the Creator is named Brahma; God as the Sustainer of the universe is Vishnu; God as the Destroyer of the universe is Shiva. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva individually have been referred to by numerous names denoting the various functionalities or attributes of each form of god. In order for Brahma, Vishnu or Shiva to perform his functions, he draws inspiration and energy from his female counterpart or consort, that is identified and worshipped as a goddess. The consorts of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are, respectively, named Saraswati, Lakshami and Parvati. These goddesses are worshipped for knowledge (learning), wealth and power, respectively. God when invoked as the obstacle remover and prayed for blessings at the outset of a project is called Ganesh. While sustaining or preserving the universe, Vishnu appears from time to time, in a form appropriate to the occasion for the restoration of order, justice and moral values in society. Each of His

numerous forms (incarnations) is worshipped, the most popular being Ram and Krishna. God is all-mighty and omnipotent; therefore, He is able to assume any form, shape and size. It is quite consistent with the common phenomenon of water transforming into vapor or ice or snow depending upon the prevailing physical conditions. After all, all matters and all forms of energy are the embodiment of God. No wonder, Hindus worship the Sun, the Moon, all planets, mountains and rivers as well as other objects, because they are manifestations of God. Every home or city or town in India has an associated god or goddess identified by a distinct name. The various deities have given rise to numerous sects. Nevertheless, the universal truth that there is one God is well recognized by the Hindu scriptures. A popular Vedic hymn (Rigveda, 1.164-46) clearly implies that there is that One God they call by so many names. A sincere worship to any form of God brings blessings from Krishna (Geeta, 7-21&22).

Why So Many Scriptures ? The primary scriptures of Hinduism are Vedas. In this regard, the following comments of Swami Vivekananda are noteworthy: "Most of the great religions of the world owe allegiance to certain books, which they believe are the words of God, or some other supernatural beings, and which are the basis of their religion. Now of all these books, according to the modern savants of the West, the oldest are the Vedas of the Hindus. ... The Vedas do not owe their authority to anybody, they are themselves the authority, being eternal – knowledge of God. They were never written, never created, they have existed throughout time; just as creation is infinite and eternal, without beginning and without end. And this knowledge is what is meant by the Vedas (Vid = to know). The mass of knowledge called Vedanta was discovered by personages called Rishis and the Rishis is defined as a Mantra Drashta, a seer of thought; not that the thought was his own." If the Vedas are diamond roughs, the secondary scriptures are sparkling diamonds cut out of the roughs. The secondary scriptures (Puranas, Itihas, Epics, etc.) illustrate and highlight the truths revealed in the Vedas. Following the codification of Vedas about 8500 years ago, more intelligible and expository (secondary) scriptures were created by personages to benefit the masses through the ages. Consequently, there are hundreds of Upanishads, eighteen Mahapuranas,

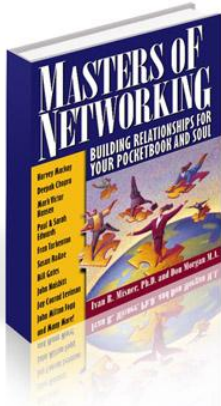
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Book Review

Masters of Networking

Authors: Ivan Misner, Don Morgan

Publisher: Bard Press 335 pages 2000



Masters of Networking has a simple message, "networking is a valuable

business and life tool." The authors, Misner and Morgan have brought this message to the readers with real life examples stated by a cross sectional experts from different areas of expertise. The experts point out what they thought on the subject of networking and what their strategies and plans were.

What I found interesting is that this book is simply a collection of short articles. Rather than a detailed plan on how to become a master of networking, it gives many short viewpoints on a wide variety of subjects related to networking. It is up to the readers to learn from the experiences of others and choose a path. I prefer this to some expert telling me what to do.

Some messages that impressed me are Lynda Goldman's observation that first impressions are based on visual, tone of voice and then what we actually say. *Masters of Networking* is full of such guidelines. Another message that impressed me is 'five non-negotiable rules:'

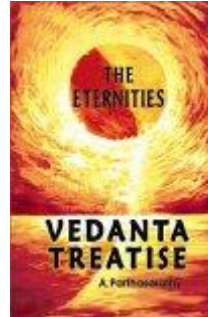
1. Don't be shy about asking for assistance
2. Always follow-up on every referral.
3. Never say or do anything to embarrass the person who provides one.
4. Respond immediately to requests by others for your assistance.
5. Constantly strengthen your networking skills but always be yourself.

Although Misner and Morgan did not write this book, they should be credited with selecting

great articles and organizing those in a way that becomes a good guideline for those who do not want to be preached.

Vedanta Treatise

Author: A. Parthasarathy



There is a difference between religion and philosophy. There is a difference between adherence to a dictum and independent thinking. Parthasarathy, in his book, *Vedanta Treatise* explains two important points: 1. The organized religion has forced the humanity to adhere to its dictum. 2. The old Hindu philosophy (not religion)

encourages the use of independent thinking and use of intellect over mind and body.

Body is a mechanical means to conduct physical activities. Mind is a receptor of information, good and bad. Intellect is the processor of the stored information that should guide our action. Thus, knowledge is within us. We do not have to let others do the thinking for us. He gives the example of not getting up early in the morning to exercise. "The mind will tell you to sleep just a little longer," says Parthasarathy, "but the intellect guides you to rise and shine."

Having said that, *The Vedanta Treatise* presents the art of living based on self knowledge. This book explains ancient Hindu philosophy (not religion) in a logical manner. An interesting revelation is the balance of three *gunas* or human nature – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. We all have *sattva* which leads us to righteousness and renunciation, *rajas* which gives rise to desire and motivation and *tamas* that accounts for restraint and inertia. The balance of the three *gunas* is essential for any human action and decision.

In the end, the book tells us that man, nature and God are the same. Knowledge and God are within us. This is also known as non-dualistic – *advaita* philosophy. I found this book to be a practical guide to living though I have reservations about the theory of reincarnation described by Parthasarathy.

Fullness Is Emptiness, Emptiness Is Fullness

The Profound Message of Buddha and Tao

Dev Raheja, *Laurel, MD*

A quotation from the Heart Sutra, the most widely used teaching on how to live day-to-day Zen life:

- Form is emptiness, emptiness is form.
- Form is not different from emptiness, emptiness is not different from form.
- The same is true of name, conception, perception, and knowledge.

The Tao (the Way, the roadless road) discipline is similar. It is sometimes referred as *the means to no particular end*. Some translate it as “you are in this world (fullness) but not of it” (emptiness). It is a beautiful paradox, where fullness and emptiness exist together as one. Just like the two sides of a coin. You cannot have one side without the other.

Bruce Lee, an intuitive Tao practitioner, describes it very nicely. He says that the phenomenon of *wu-hsin, or no-mindedness*” is not a blank mind that shuts out all the thoughts and emotions: nor it is simply calmness and quietness of mind. It is the non-grasping of thoughts. It is a mind immune to emotional influences. Therein lays the secret of fullness of life: the Emptiness. The word form in the sutra refers to the matter. That includes our thoughts and emotions.

The meaning of the word emptiness obviously is different than the ordinary use of this word. But we have no better word for it. Languages are incapable of describing such truths. You can certainly experience the non-grasping.

It can be concluded that emptiness does not mean nothingness. A room can be full of furniture and thousands of ants crawling in it, yet we call it empty. It is empty in one sense and full in other sense. The reason we still call it empty is because there is no disturbance of any kind. Such a state of mind, when there is no disturbance, is emptiness. In this state there is no misery. If we can be in this state all the time, then we are completely free from suffering. The Nirvana is then right here.

CULTIVATING EMPTINESS

The description so far is just a finger pointing towards emptiness. If it could be described in words then it is not emptiness. Lao Tzu once said: Truth cannot be described. If you can describe it, then it is not truth. Even the feeling cannot be described. You can only experience it. If you eat an apple, can you accurately describe how it feels?

One way to experience Emptiness is to practice the following statement:

**The good and evil are two sides of a coin.
The coin itself is free of both.**

This means that if an incident you experienced last week

appears in your thought, you don't say: “I like it” or “I dislike it”. The minute you make either of these choices, your mind will cling to them, resulting in disturbance. You just let the thought come; do not feed more fuel to it. Of course, it does not mean that there is no good or bad in this world. The point here is that an encounter with a good experience should not give rise to craving in mind for it. Similarly, an encounter with a bad experience should not give rise to hatred.

ENJOY - DON'T REACT

Many people think that you have to detach yourself from things and be non-emotional. If you have to detach, then there is a struggle in mind. Buddha's teaching is that you neither attach nor detach. You just accept the things as they are in the nature. If you see a rose flower and a sun flower, don't automatically conclude that the rose is better of the two. Such a conclusion is based on your past traditions, emotions, and beliefs, which have been programmed into your mind like a computer software. Then you tend to behave like a robot, not like a living being.

A person whose mind is unconditioned, can see both flowers just as beautiful. The rose is beautiful in its own way - so is the sunflower. The unconditioned mind, if it has to choose, will choose the flowers differently at different times, depending on the intuition without analysis. You just feel the poetry of the flower, then move on to whatever comes next without clinging to what you just experienced.

NO ANALYSIS PLEASE!

Let us take the mundane task of wearing clothes. If it is too cold, I just wear more clothes. If it is too warm I change to less or cooler clothing. I don't analyze what will look good on me, what people will think of me, or will they invite me ever again. You just accept the weather as it is. No need to complain. The weather is a gift of Mother Nature. It is not going to change just because you complain. So why bother liking or disliking it? That is the experience of emptiness

UNDERSTAND WHAT IS NATURAL

A woman brought her baby son to pay respect to a monk. She told her son to bow to the monk. Instead, the little boy started crying and peeing in his pants. The mother got upset and started to punish the child until the monk said: “The child is not doing anything wrong. It is natural for a child to cry, and it is normal for a child to pee. He is doing what needs to be done.” He further told the woman that it is she who is creating misery for herself by embarrassing and punishing the child for something that is the child's pure nature.

This parable once helped me laugh off instead of getting

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Current Affairs

Join the VODER Movement (Vote Out Democrats and Republicans)

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

The chaos as a result of British Petroleum's (BP) debacle has left the Americans perplexed. The Democrats are blaming 'drill baby drill' attitude of the Republicans and the latter is blaming the ineptness of the present establishment in Washington DC.

We forget that the blame should equally go to BP for not doing proper maintenance of the rig and for not having a back up plan (risk analysis and Failure Mode and Effects Analysis) and also to our politicians (both Democrats, Republicans and our President) and federal agents for accepting campaign money and kickbacks respectively from BP.

The blame should mainly go to the government agencies responsible for reviewing the reliability and maintainability (R&M) plans of BP. Any plan whether Apollo 13 or landing on the moon or drilling for oil should have a rescue plan. The only plan BP used was bribe to the government officials and campaign money to the Democrats, the Republicans and to our President.

Some facts about BP's negligence ignored by corrupt government officials:

In an e-mail written six days before the Deepwater Horizon explosion, a BP engineer called the well a "nightmare." The e-mail was released by the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, and it's one of many company documents describing the risky, cost-cutting decisions that preceded the disaster. BP opted against installing the liner, which would have cost an extra \$7 million to \$10 million.

Halliburton, the company responsible for cement in the well shaft, recommended using 21 "centralizers" to position the metal tube that ran down the center of the well. An off-center tube would cause cement to harden at different rates, producing gaps and channels that could weaken its structure and increase chances of failure. BP used just six centralizers.

A mid-April review of the well said "it is unlikely to be a successful cement job," but BP declined to run a "cement bond log," a day-long evaluation of the cement's integrity. A crew that arrived expecting to perform the evaluation was sent home.

BP also failed to circulate mud that filled the well as it was drilled. That allowed mud that stayed on the bottom to absorb gas and debris, further weakening cement at the well's base. BP then decided not to use a "lockdown sleeve," which would have secured the top of the well, where it emerged from the seafloor.

(Source: House committee's website).

Corrupt MMS and Federal Regulators

The Mineral management Service (MMS), a bureau in the U.S. Department of the Interior, is the Federal agency that manages the nation's natural gas, oil and other mineral resources. The federal regulators are supposed to check the risk analysis and preventive and safety measures proposed by

an oil drilling company. However, the service has a culture where the acceptance of gifts from oil and gas companies is widespread.

When it first looked into drilling the area, BP asked for exemption from the federal law that requires an environmental review. The federal regulators granted it.

In June 2009 BP drilling engineers realized that their equipment deviated from the company's own safety policies. They asked higher management what they should do and were told to go ahead.

The blowout preventer is a crucial failsafe mechanism near the ocean floor. But regulators granted an exception when company officials wanted to test it at a lower pressure than federal law required.

Regulators granted another exception when BP sought to delay mandatory testing of the blowout preventer after they had lost "well control" – just weeks before the rig exploded. The Minerals Management Service, which regulates offshore drilling, went along with these requests partly because the agency collects royalty payments from the drilling companies. (Source: The Washington Post)

What should be done now? Voting for Republicans instead of the Democrats is not going to solve the problem. They are different faces of the same coin. What the American public needs is a movement so that their voice is heard and noticed, a statement at polling booths. Since all the politicians, both Republicans and Democrats are equally inept and corrupt, the American public should vote for anyone but the two prevalent parties. Let the rascals out and let them learn a lesson.

Let us start the silent movement now. My countrymen and women, I urge you not to cast your ballot for any Democrat or Republican. Go ahead and vote for any third party candidate. Anyone can run and govern the country better than now elected representatives. So, why not to make a statement? I am going to do it now. Won't you join me in saving America? If yes, please send me a note right now at change@thethinkclub.com. Join the silent movement!

**See page 11 for list of politicians
who received campaign money from BP**

Sent your comments to:

**The THINK Club,
P.O. Box 451,
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48303-0451**

Or email to:

letters@thethinkclub.com

Only Eastern Philosophy Can Cure Our Ills

By Musafir

Organized religion is the most destructive element to affect the human race. It forces us to give up our independent thinking and adhere to the dictum of zealots and their holy books. Even the most intelligent people accept their authority for the fear of hell and unknown consequences.

Unfortunately, the alternative adopted by the disillusioned is not any better either. People dissatisfied with religion are adopting the vices and immorality in want of any guidelines for living. Humanity is at a juncture where the only savior seems to be the eastern philosophies.

Although eastern philosophies are labeled as religions, basically they teach us the art of living. I do not term eastern wisdoms as religions since they are not organized; they don't have a single holy book or a prophet. The basic principles (not decrees or orders) of eastern philosophies can be summed up as follows:

- One has control over doing his/her respective duty only but has no control over claims or results – Hinduism (The Gita)
- Knowledge lies within oneself – Hinduism (Vedanta)
- God, nature and self are one –Hinduism (Vedanta)
- A person is made of body, mind and intellect. Intellect is the processor of information gathered by mind. Intellect alone reasons and discriminates between right and wrong –Hinduism (Vedanta and The Gita)
- Lust, anger and greed lead to the downfall of the individual - Hinduism (The Gita)
- Unhappiness stems from a failure to correctly perceive, accept and deal with reality. –Confucianism
- Harmonize with the universe. Our lives will go smoothly than if we act against it -Taoism
- There is suffering and misery in life. The cause of this suffering and misery is desire. Suffering and misery can be removed by removing desire. -Buddhism
- Existence of God is within all living creatures which become manifested after death and equalizes to the supreme God. –Shintoism

It is time we stop hating each other based on dogmas, rituals and mythologies. If any system or religion mandates us to refrain from questioning or using independent thinking, it is definitely enslaving our mind and spirit. It is time to adopt the teachings of eastern philosophies and rid ourselves from the clutches of ignorance propagated by organized religions.

Eastern Philosophy Alone Cannot Cure All

By Bala Prasad

As we watch the changing of the guard of the Worlds greatest civilizations from the United States to China or India we see history repeating itself as it has so many times before. It was not much more than 200 years ago when Great Britain was the greatest nation in the World, and soon after that, the United States. Now, perhaps due to our own follies and lack of forward progression we will be passing the torch again and in doing so taking our place as a footnote in the annals of history.

Would adopting an Eastern philosophy cure our Western problems? I do not think so.

Rudyard Kipling wrote: “East is East, and West is West, and the twain shall never meet.” This was true in the early last century, when we would have seen the conflict of science and spirituality as one between East and West. The Western cultures ignored the spiritual and the Eastern cultures ignored the material (the domain of science) – not true anymore. As science and spirituality have become increasingly integrated, so do Eastern and Western culture. This continued integration (and not Eastern culture alone) is the only thing that will solve Western woes. A blending of both cultures may be the beginning of the solution.

We know from our own short 200-year history in the United States that in western worlds, capitalism and western culture lifts people up, if they allow it to. We have seen in recent history how Socialism and Communism have tended to push people down into debt and inefficiency. So when we ask which is better; one government structure or one culture over another, it appears that one could indeed be right no matter which side they argue. And indeed in such abstract thought it seems we are all of the same genes and all one in that regard. The only difference between you neighbor in the United States and one of Asian Ancestry is probably not more than 3000-4000 years and certainly not more than 10,000 to 15,000. We all belong to a fairly successful species which has come quite a ways and whose future is very bright if we will dump these egocentric attitude and that goes for both sides. Additionally had it not been for our long and strong history of capitalists, we in the Western World would have never achieved this level of civilization, yet we condemn those who got us here and those that follow in their footsteps. So if Western Culture is better, why do we attack it?

While the clash of Eastern versus Western culture makes for an interesting debate, the question itself is wrong as we are comparing apples and oranges. Even Gandhi, when asked what he thought of Western Culture, he said; “I think it would be a good idea.” So, while the West may have its fair share of problems, Eastern solutions alone will not save the day; instead, we have to take the best of both cultures and forge ahead.

Continued from Page 3

Editorial - Reason or Religion

that something is probably true, deductive arguments try to prove their conclusions, that is, they try to show that the conclusion is absolutely true. This is a much higher standard of persuasion, and difficult to meet. But it's something many philosophers aspire to, and understandably so: no matter how strong an inductive argument we make, we must always admit that there is some reason to doubt whether its conclusion is true. But if we can make a strong deductive argument, we can set aside our doubts.

Here is an example of a deductive argument:

Premise 1: All humans are mortal.

Premise 2: John is a human.

Conclusion: John is mortal.

We can see that the premises don't just make the conclusion probably true; they make it true, period.

Religion has blinded us by giving valid but unsound arguments. The problem is that lots of arguments are faulty. Some arguments are so obviously bad that we should reject them at first sight. But other faulty arguments may look quite appealing, and we may be fooled by them if we are not careful.

Here are examples of valid but unsound argument from the Bible:

Premise 1: The Bible says, "Kill every male and every woman who is not a virgin."

Premise 2: Cassandra is not a virgin.

Conclusion: Kill Cassandra.

The arguments above are valid as the premises support the conclusion. However, any logical person will consider the arguments as unsound and reject them. Unfortunately, many will act on those arguments simply because those are valid.

Other than unsound arguments, most religious beliefs are inconsistent because they are not logical. For example, saying that Islam is benevolent, but honor killing is justified are two conflicting statements. There seems to be an inconsistency here: If Islam is benevolent then girls should not be killed for falling in love with so called *kafir* (non-believers) If honor killing is justifiable, it should apply to boys also. Therefore, one of the principles must be incorrect. Of course, the fact that there is an inconsistency does not show which claim or principle is mistaken - it just shows that at least one must be incorrect.

One of the ways to analyze what is logical and what is not is to ask these three questions: (1) Is it impossible? (2) Is it possible? and (3) Is it probable?

1. Something is *impossible* if there is no way that it could be true.

Lord Ganesh rides a mouse wherever he goes. Therefore, mice are holy and we should feed the mice in our temples. First of all, Lord Ganesh is so heavy that he cannot ride a mouse. Mice are sources of plague. They should not be fed or sheltered at the places of worship.

2. Something is *possible* if there is a chance that it could be true. "A tree is recognized by its fruit." This is certainly *possible*.

3. Something is *probable* if it is more likely true than not true. We must weigh the evidence and decide.

"Truth will triumph," has been proven to be true throughout the history. However, it may not happen during one's lifetime, therefore, it may not be obvious to us. But based on history, it is probable and likely to be true in the long run.

Our cure for the fallacy spread by religion is to look at the evidence as if we were holding a balance scale. We should look at the evidence, and filter out the arguments that are probably not true. This is hard for people like us! We never want to throw away our favorite possibilities.

Many of my teachers and peers tell me that I should have a blind faith in religion and should not question its mandates. This disturbs me. I do not believe in "all" or "none" persuasion. Unfortunately, religion gives us only one choice, "accept all," otherwise I have "none." To me, it paints a mob representation. As a thinker, I am leery in accepting the finite, that "all" or "none" possess. The inflammatory statement, "all idolaters should be killed" makes the point. I would rather have 'some' with proof positive, than "all" or "none" and wonder if every possibility was really considered. We have to take control of our own intellect and independent thinking. In this world of human beings, there is always a possibility and urge to err. Man made religious mandates induce those tendencies. Only reasoning can lead us to divinity and forgiveness.

Politicians Who Received Campaign Money from BP

(Source: Reuter and Capitol News)

Recipient of BP Campaign Money	Amount \$
Barack Obama	77,051
John McCain	44,899
Sen. George Voinovich , R-Ohio	41,400
Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich.	31,000
Sen. Mary Landrieu , D-La	28,000
Rep. Joe Barton , R-Texas	27,350
Sen. James Inhofe , R-Okla	22,300
Senate Min. Ldr Mitch McConnell	22,000
Rep. John Culberson , R-Texas	20,950
Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison , R-	19,500
Sen. Kit Bond , R-Missouri	19,200
House Maj. Ldr Steny Hoyer	16,000
House Min. Ldr John Boehner	15,200
Sen. Jeff Bingaman , D-N.M	14,000
Sen. Richard Shelby , R-Ala	14,000
Rep. Roy Blunt , R-Mo	12,500
Sen. Mike Enzi , R-Wyo	11,000
Rep. Chet Edwards , D-Texas	10,500
Sen. Sherrod Brown , D-Ohio	10,500
Sen. Arlen Specter , D-Pa	9,500
Sen. John Kerry , R-Mass	9,500
Sen. Robert Bennett , R-Utah	9,000

Continued from Page 6

Hinduism Reflects Unity in Diversity

voluminous Mahabharat, Ramayan and many more scriptures as well as innumerable related commentaries. The Ramayan is a very popular Hindu scripture. The Geeta regarded as the Hindu's Bible is a part of the Mahabharat. Although hundreds of scriptures currently exist, all of them present the same basic truths in different fashions or formats.

Why people are not created equal or alike ? Everybody is born with certain aptitude, abilities and attributes which differ from person to person. Such differentiating qualities are due to Sanskaras (related to Karmas) acquired during the previous life time. This is why, for example, a good teacher cannot be a good soldier, a good business man or a good farmer, or vice versa. Lord Krishna (Geeta, 18-41) recognizes four classes (Varnas) of humans - priests, warriors, businessman and laborers for the smooth functioning of society, their roles being mutually complementary and conducive. But, with the passage of time, such social classification in India degenerated into a caste system which is indeed tantamount to a social evil. It must be understood that casteism is not Hinduism. Of course, among the non-Hindus, there are classes of haves and have-nots, which are riddled with similar social problems rooted in injustice and discriminatory criteria. Nevertheless, the Hindu scriptures underscore the truth that all individuals are potentially divine. True Hindus see God in everything and everything in God (Geeta, 6-30). Thus, the Hindus experience oneness of existence.

In conclusion, the Hindu religion recognizes innumerable deities and multiple approaches to God, and has numerous scriptures as well as a multiplicity of sects. Nonetheless, Hinduism highlights the truth of multifariously manifested singular God with the creation of varied classes of humans and other beings, reflecting unity in diversity.

Continued from Page 8

Fullness Is Emptiness

agitated at my grandson. The incident took place at a Buddhist Temple. My three year old grandson didn't want to listen to a long sermon by the priest He got up and, despite my trying to stop him, went to the altar and offered incense to Buddha to signal the end of the service and the time to go home. I expected everyone to signal me to remove him from the altar. Instead, everyone, including the priest, laughed. I could not stop laughing myself. They knew that it is natural for a child to get bored with a long speech. In another similar incidence, a great priest was speaking with a desk in front of him. My grandson started playing with a toy car on the speaker's desk while the speaker kept speaking. Nobody was disturbed, not even the speaker. That is emptiness!

ADVANCING THE CULTIVATION

The first stage of cultivation of Emptiness is to unify the body and mind into a single stream of concentration. This is done through the practice of meditation. If your mind is at rest and the body in a relaxed state, you will forget about the body. There is feeling of silence in which you forget that even you are there. Yet you are fully aware of what is going on (Fullness). That is when body and the mind are one. Suddenly, the body pain is not there, as if it were empty!

But this kind of state needs to be achieved even when you are not meditating. That is why Buddha said that all forms are empty. When non-graspingness is there, even the names, concepts, perceptions, and knowledge are empty. When you are empty, none of these matter. Nothing is on your mind!

The second stage is to unify the body, mind, and the environment. Let us consider that you are entertaining a guest. You are done talking but he still feels the need to keep talking because silence is boredom for him. If you pay full attention to his talk but you are not emotionally reacting, then your body and mind are at ease and, therefore, united. But let us add another element. There are many other guests who are giggling and making disturbing remarks. If you can still listen to your guest and not be disturbed by other guests then your body, mind, and environment, all three are united.

The last stage of cultivation of Emptiness is going beyond the mind. It is called the state of no-mind, or Samadhi. In this stage, there is no awareness of the individual self, as with Buddha, and Raman Maharishi. A Tao saying is: The highly evolved or cultivated person many selves. There is another Tao description of the Emptiness: No identity is true identity! You are nobody when it comes to ego. You belong to everybody when it comes to love and compassion, like the sun that gives sunshine regardless of good or a bad person.

ULTIMATE EMPTINESS

A Tao sage, Chung Tzu, gives the description of a perfectly happy person. He says:

Do not seek fame.

Do not be absorbed by activities.

Do not think that you know.

Be aware of all that is and dwell in the infinite.

Be empty that is all. It grasps nothing. It expects nothing

Therefore, the cultivated person can act without effort.

Buddha's teachings give the ultimate view. It is about connectivity and who we are. One theory is like peeling an onion. If you keep peeling the layers of who you are not, ultimately you discover that there is nothing. But that also is an illusion. It appears there is nothing but there is infinite consciousness there. This is the same consciousness that permeates through all of us. Some may call it a mystic power or God, others may call it Emptiness. For example: take an empty cup. The space inside the cup seems to be limited to the volume of the cup. The space outside the cup is same but infinite. Are they the same space? The answer, of course, is yes. Once the cup breaks, both the spaces become one. There is no boundary between the two. The space never changes. It neither increases nor decreases. There is no birth or death. The consciousness that permeates through us is similar to space. There may be clouds, rain, and storms but the space never gets disturbed. So does the consciousness. This is the nature of Emptiness. Happiness depends on who do you identify with. If you identify yourself with the cup, you create individuality, an ego. If you identify with the infinite, in which we are all connected through the consciousness, everyone becomes a part of you. You become like space, where clouds do not disturb you.

Traditional Medicine vs. Alternative Medicine: You Decide

By Niru Prasad

In modern Western culture, we have become accustomed to thinking of “traditional” medicine as what is practiced in mainstream doctors’ offices and hospitals. Natural or alternative medicine, by contrast, takes a holistic approach to treatment, looking at the overall person and the whole body, rather than simply the symptoms being experienced. In many cases, natural medicine works on preventing the body from becoming ill or depleted. Meanwhile, conventional medicine, in which treatments are based on the results of scientific trials, tends to treat the symptoms that patients experience, as well as some diseases. However, generally speaking, conventional medicine looks at these symptoms in isolation and usually after the illness has already occurred. Conventional medicine is also known as allopathic medicine or Western medicine. The name Western medicine came about because many of the alternative therapies and natural healing practices currently in use originate from the East.

What is Alternative Medicine?

Although it is called alternative, traditional medicine is widely used around the world. In fact, in many countries, herbal medicines are given before conventional medical treatment. Alternative medicine has always been popular in developing countries, and its popularity in industrialized nations is increasing rapidly.

In India, the alternative medicines were known as Vedic medicines or Aired. Ayurveda has been practiced for thousands and thousands of years and is still in practice. The aim of Ayurveda medicine is balancing the harmony of mind, soul and body. Ayurveda is an alternative medicine made from herbs, certain vegetables, fruits and natural minerals. There are historical evidences that surgeries were also performed as part of ayurveda treatment in olden days. Ayurveda prescribes alternative medicines for curing common cold, stroke and paralysis and certain mental diseases.

In China, alternative medicine was practiced for centuries and its concept is based on Taoist philosophy. The practice of alternative medicine in China that also spread to Japan and Korea is known as Oriental branch of alternative medicine. The two schools that contributed to the practice of alternative medicine and therapies are “Jinfang” and “Wenbing”. You must be aware of the term “acupuncture”. This originated in China and is used to treat various orthopedic and neurological ailments and is popular even today. Chinese treated the human mind and the body and not the disease. They believed a strong human body could never fall sick.

Uses of Traditional Medicine

Most people are familiar with the tools of conventional medicine, such as blood tests and x-rays, but what exactly does natural medicine entail? Traditional medicine may use



plant-, animal- and mineral-based products for treatment. It may also include spiritual and manual therapies.

Some types of alternative therapies include:
acupressure: massage in specific areas for pain relief.

acupuncture: the insertion of thin, heated needles into the body to treat symptoms and balance the energy

Chinese herbal medicine: the use of plant-based remedies to treat or prevent illness.

energy therapies: the practice of channeling energy through the hands for healing. (Reiki is a type of energy therapy.)

homeopathy: the use of small amounts of natural remedies to treat illness.

kinesiology: the use of muscle tests to identify and correct imbalances in the body.

massage therapy: the practice of manipulating skin, muscles and joints to relieve stress and pain.

Eastern Medicine versus Western Medicine

Debate about the merits of Eastern medicine versus Western medicine (also referred to as natural vs. allopathic medicine) has been going on for years. Arguments against the use of natural medicine focus on the lack of verifiable scientific data that proves it works. Although studies have been done on traditional Eastern medicine, many of these have been criticized for not being rigorous enough. Others have focused on the fact that the results of studies receive negative press, even when they appear to work for the target group most at risk. Other criticism focuses on the fact that people may take longer to seek conventional treatments. Instead, many people turn to natural medicines first, making it harder to achieve success with Western medicine. Issues relating to unwanted side effects of natural medicines, plus the fact that this area is virtually unregulated, are other reasons for concern. Finally, many alternative therapies are not covered by health insurance.

In the end, only the patient can decide what treatment works best for them. The important thing is that the patient seeks treatment, either natural or conventional, and that the treatment heals.

Acupuncture is another way of alternative medicine that has gained lots of popularity in United States.

IN SUMMARY THE DEBATE ABOUT THE MERIT OF EASTERN VERSUS WESTERN MEDICINE HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR CENTURIES. THE ARGUMENT AGAINST THE USE OF NATURAL MEDICINE FOCUSES ON THE LACK OF SCIENTIFIC DATA TO PROVE THE FACT OF TREATMENT. OTHER CRITICISM INCLUDES THE FACT THAT PEOPLE MAY TAKE LONGER TO SEEK REAL MEDICAL HELP UNTIL THE DISEASE PROGRESSES AND ALSO MOST OF THEM ARE NOT COVERED BY INSURANCE.

The Most Intriguing Mathematical Formula Ever

Euler was the first to write five most significant numbers in all of mathematics in one equation $e^{(i\pi)} + 1 = 0$

The Euler formula, sometimes also called the Euler identity, states

$$e^{ix} = \cos x + i \sin x, \quad (1)$$

where i is the imaginary unit. Note that Euler's polyhedral formula is sometimes also called the Euler formula, as is the Euler curvature formula. The equivalent expression

$$ix = \ln(\cos x + i \sin x) \quad (2)$$

had previously been published by Cotes (1714).

The special case of the formula with $x = \pi$ gives the beautiful identity

$$e^{i\pi} + 1 = 0, \quad (3)$$

an equation connecting the fundamental numbers i , π , e , 1 , and 0 (zero), the fundamental operations $+$, \times , and exponentiation, the most important relation $=$, and nothing else. Gauss is reported to have commented that if this formula was not immediately obvious, the reader would never be a first-class mathematician (Derbyshire 2004, p. 202).

The Euler formula can be demonstrated using a series expansion

$$e^{ix} = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{(ix)^n}{n!} \quad (4)$$

$$= \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{(-1)^n x^{2n}}{(2n)!} + i \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{(-1)^{n-1} x^{2n-1}}{(2n-1)!} \quad (5)$$

$$= \cos x + i \sin x. \quad (6)$$

It can also be demonstrated using a complex integral. Let

$$z \equiv \cos \theta + i \sin \theta \quad (7)$$

$$dz = (-\sin \theta + i \cos \theta) d\theta \quad (8)$$

$$= i(\cos \theta + i \sin \theta) d\theta \quad (9)$$

$$= iz d\theta \quad (10)$$

$$\int \frac{dz}{z} = \int i d\theta \quad (11)$$

$$\ln z = i\theta, \quad (12)$$

so

$$z = e^{i\theta} \quad (13)$$

$$\equiv \cos \theta + i \sin \theta. \quad (14)$$

A mathematical joke asks, "How many mathematicians does it take to change a light bulb?" and answers " $-e^{i\pi}$ " (which, of course, equals 1).

Democrats: Welcome to the Republican Party

By Robert Bickmeyer

An aggregate of seven polls discloses that 19 percent of Americans admit to being liberal (mostly Democrats) and 38 percent admit to being conservative (mostly Republicans). It can then be logically concluded that, with twice as many agreeing with their ideology, the Republicans would coast to an easy victory in every election. But wait, there is a greater number, the remaining 43 percent who are independent and/or the uninformed masses who might vote once every four years in a presidential election.

At the risk of appearing snobbish, as a resident of Troy, Michigan (located in one of the five most prosperous counties in the U.S.), allow me to state that the voters of Troy are, generally speaking, better educated and more informed on issues than the voters of Detroit. I doubt anyone can deny that. Allow me to further state that in presidential races Bob Dole defeated Bill Clinton and George W. Bush defeated Al Gore in Troy (population about 80,000), but Clinton and Gore were the winners in Detroit (population about 800,000).

Many Democrats dismiss being called liberal (as if it is a dirty word) and prefer being called “progressive.” I am progressive. For example, I favor national adoption of the metric system in lieu of the antiquated weights and measures in use by the United States and only a few other countries. On moral issues, liberals consider themselves progressive because they favor “advanced” lifestyles: unwed couples living together, killing unborn babies, gay marriage, free use of pornography and obscenities and that mythical “separation of church and state” that is nowhere in the Constitution.

If that is being progressive, then put me on God’s side, Who considered all such acts sinful 100 years ago and still does. I guess He isn’t a progressive liberal. Consequently, those 94 percent of Americans who believe in God or a universal spirit are obliged to think Republican when they enter the voting booth.

Republicans are, generally speaking, better educated, read editorial pages of newspapers and are more informed on the issues. Many Democratic voters follow the party line because their parents were Democrats or they are influenced by the slanted liberal news given them by ABC, CBS and NBC. They still believe it is a party for the poor and the working class. In the 2000 presidential election 39 felons voted illegally – three Republican, three Independent and 33 Democrat.

Well informed people like William Bennett, Linda Chavez, Eldridge Cleaver, Ari Fleischer, Rudy Giuliani, Bernard Goldberg, David Horowitz, Michael Medved, Dennis Miller, Dick Morris, Ronald Reagan, Condaleeza Rice, J.C. Watts and many other lesser known voters were Democrats who have been converted to Republicans. Some of them have said, “I was once a Democrat, but I never left the party. The party left me.”

It was Thomas Jefferson who said, “Only people who are well informed can be trusted with their own government.” Fellow Americans, we are stuck with the uninformed who, I reluctantly admit, decide many elections.

Marshall Whitman, a Jewish worker for the Christian Coalition, said it: “Liberal elites propagated the view that drugs were okay, the two-parent family was optional, criminals were misunderstood, prayer in public schools was bad and abortion was just another form of birth control.”

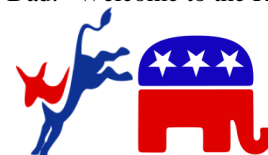
Democrats and our liberal media consistently attacked President George W. Bush for “his” war in Iraq, a war that toppled evil Saddam Hussein who had killed hundreds of thousands of Iraqi people. Iraqis danced in the streets and thanked Bush when our troops marched into Baghdad and millions of them have gone to the polls in their new-found democracy. The liberals are now silent as President Barack Obama pursues “his” war in Afghanistan.

A brief history lesson follows: A January 1951 Gallop Poll showed that 49 percent of Americans felt that sending troops to Korea was a mistake, and 66 percent said we should abandon Korea. President Harry Truman, Democrat, courageously ignored the polls. South Korea is now a successful democracy with a thriving economy. Thus, 54,000 of our military died for a good cause.

President John F. Kennedy, Democrat, said, “Let the world know that we will bear any burden and pay any price for freedom,” as he courageously dispatched more troops to Vietnam. Sadly, 58,000 Americans died in vain because our generals were not permitted to fight a winning war.

What has happened to the Democratic party which is supposedly so compassionate and wanting to help the downtrodden? There are no Harry Trumans or John F. Kennedys in today’s Democratic party They were Americans first and Democrats second.

After her first year at the University of Michigan Jane lectured her Republican father on his unwillingness to share all his wealth with unemployed people. When she finished her lecture Dad asked, “What is your grade point average?” “She proudly answered, “4.0.” “Good,” said Dad, “And how is your friend Lucille doing?” Jane: “Unfortunately, she only has a 2.0.” Dad: “Well, help her out. Give her one of your points. Then you will each have 3.0.” Jane: “Are you serious? She’s been partying, skipping classes and not studying while I’ve been skipping good times and working my butt off. That wouldn’t be fair.” Dad: “Welcome to the Republican Party.”



Observations

Science and Hinduism

By David Beagan

Hinduism, among the oldest religions, among the oldest ways of life. When I began to learn a little about it, I was struck by the openness and inclusiveness of Hinduism. A person of most any belief system can align themselves with the principles of Hinduism. Furthermore there are parallels in the Hindu belief system and the realm of science.

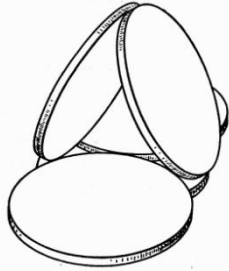
Years ago I heard it said that about someone who lived their lives in alignment with scientific knowledge that, "science is your religion." I thought this was a bit presumptuous. But now reflecting back I can understand that ultimately whether one adheres to a religion or science (or even both) that ultimately one accepts certain tenets as true and proceeds from there to build a belief system. From earliest time people have noted the order in the universe. There is a lot of messiness to be sure -- as residents of the Gulf Coast can attest -- but beneath that layer of griminess there exists an order that has amazed scientists throughout history. Einstein said, "The most incomprehensible thing about the world is that it is comprehensible." This assumption of a deeper order in the universe is embodied in principle of Occam's Razor. Occam's Razor indicates that the simplest explanation of a situation is the correct one. This guiding principle to the explanation of the universe is reflective of Hinduism's Dharma, the unchanging universal law of order. Mathematics, the foundation which makes the sciences possible, is the study of order and patterns in their pure form. Mathematics can be viewed as the scientific expression of Dharma: everything behaves according to the rules that apply to the nature of each thing. Sir Arthur Eddington said the universe is not only stranger than we imagine, it is stranger than we *can* imagine. And yet with each new surprising discovery in the scientific realm, a new Dharmic order is found. Copernicus determined that the Earth was not the center of the universe. Galileo trained his newly constructed telescope on the Moon and overturned the established order that the Moon was a perfect heavenly body by discovering it to have a rough and uneven surface. Newton realized that gravity controlled the actions of objects here on earth as well as in the heavens. Einstein found the speed of light to be the universal speed limit and that energy and mass are just two different manifestations of the underlying essence. With each of these seemingly strange discoveries a deeper and fuller Dharma was realized.

Unlike other religions, Hinduism has no particular founder. It emerged from various diverse traditions. Similarly science did not instantly emerge fully formed but developed out of earlier attempts of humans to explain the world around them. From mythology to observation to the systematic recording of observations. At some point it was realized that through experimentation knowledge could be gained. Finally, the crown jewel, the scientific method came to full fruition as a foundation stone of modern science.

From Page 17 - Answers to Mental Exercise

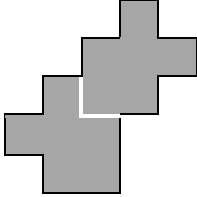
Five Touching Half Dollars.

The half dollars are arranged as shown below.



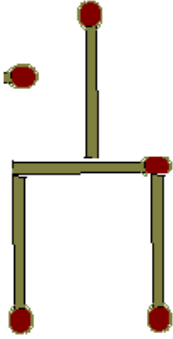
Cut in Two

Cut on the white line to divide the figure in half.



Remove the Onion

Move the match originally on the left to the lower right and slide the horizontal match to the right. Now the glass is upside down and onion is outside the glass.



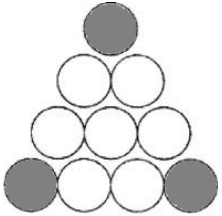
Three Boxes

You can identify all three boxes just by drawing a marble from the box labeled White-Black. If you draw a black marble, then you know the other marble in the box is black. Now the box labeled White-White must contain a black and white marble. Finally, that just leaves the Black-Black box to contain the two white marbles.

If the first drawn marble is white, then follow a similar chain of reasoning to determine the box's contents.

Triangle Flip

Move the three corner circles to new positions as indicated by the gray shaded circles.



Remembering Martin Gardner

By David Beagan

On May 22 one of my heroes passed away, Martin Gardner. He was my inspiration for this column. From 1957 to 1981 he wrote the Mathematical Games column for Scientific American. It was probably in the early 1970s that I discovered his column at the public library in Wayne Michigan. I was fascinated by the subjects he presented, flexigons, polyominoes, the game of life, the game of hex, the soma cube, and of course many puzzles were posed for the reader to solve. Here's a good puzzle to try:

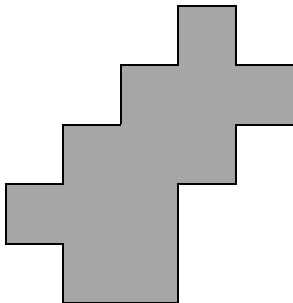
Touching Half Dollars

Can you arrange five half dollars so that each one touches the other four?

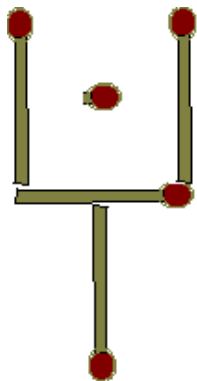
Gardner many books on subjects of pseudoscience, magic, secret codes, science, and even an annotated version of Alice in Wonderland. But his puzzles books compiled from his columns were plentiful. Here are some examples.

Cut in Two

Can you cut the figure below into two equal parts? Use one single cut but it doesn't have to be straight.



Remove the Olive



Here are four matchsticks arranged to represent a martini glass. A match head, is in the glass representing an olive. The challenge is to move two matches to get the olive out of the glass.

It is hard to imagine how many people he touched, how the reach of his influence exercised young minds and inspired young people to enter

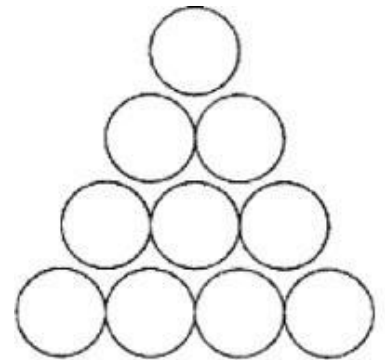
technical fields. Here's a good puzzle that I'm sure stimulated many.

Three Boxes

You have three boxes, one containing two white marbles, one containing two black marbles and one containing a black and a white marble. The boxes are labeled White-White, Black-Black, and White-Black for their contents but someone has mislabeled the boxes so that every box has the wrong label. Your task is to draw a marble from a box, and guess the contents of all boxes. Can you do it by just drawing three marbles, just two, or just one?

Triangle Flip

Consider the figure shown with ten circles formed into a triangle. How few circles need to be moved in order to turn the triangle upside down



Once Martin was asked how he deals with the crackpots who would write him with such things as a proof of squaring the circle or trisecting an angle – impossible to do with just a straightedge and a compass. I loved his answer. He would tell them that they really need to contact this other fellow who was an expert in the field. The other fellow was, of course, also some other crackpot who had written him.



Answers on Page 16

Mathematics: "has a strange kind of unearthly beauty. There is a strong feeling of pleasure, hard to describe, in thinking through an elegant proof, and even greater pleasure in discovering a proof not previously known.

– Martin Gardner

Twain Shall Meet!

By Bala Prasad

Rudyard Kipling said it best, "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." What is it about these two cultures that polarizes them so much? Eastern culture defines itself by spiritualism, and the West for materialism. Easterners are concerned for their soul – for its development in this life and for where it goes after this life. Westerners, by contrast, are worldly-minded. They want to enjoy there here and now, and prefer not to contemplate the hereafter. Hence, the West is in mad dash for wealth, luxury, and comfort. The East is the birthplace of great religious leaders – Christ, Buddha, Gandhi, and it was here that they lived and preached. The West, meanwhile, is the home of modern science and technology. Wonderful inventions have come out of the West that have shaped the way we live today.

Recently, a social psychologist from the University of Michigan, conducted an experiment testing how people from Eastern and Western cultures look at objects differently. The test subjects of the experiment were 25 American and 27 Chinese students. Each of them was shown 36 photos, and they were allowed to see each photo for 3 seconds. Each photo depicted a single subject against a realistic and complex background. For example, one photo showed a tiger (the single subject) in a forest (the complex background). The experiment revealed that it takes a shorter amount of time for the American test subjects to focus their attention on the foreground image of each photo, and they also spent a longer time looking at the foreground image than the Chinese test subjects did. On the other hand, the Chinese test subjects spent more time looking at the background images and less time on the foreground images. When the test subjects were given memory tests afterwards, the Chinese test subjects could remember the background images more clearly and the American test subjects could remember the foreground images more clearly. This experiment drove home the point that Eastern culture puts more emphasis on looking at an issue holistically while people from the western culture (such as Americans) tend to analyze different objects independently.

Eastern and Western temperaments are also vastly different. Easterners are traditionally tolerant, self-sacrificing, and peace-loving. They are largely non-violent and will freely sacrifice their own good for a greater good. Westerners are aggressive by nature,

confident in their own views, less-compromising than their Eastern counterparts.

Until recently, the East and West have been kept apart. Historically, the only reason the West had for being in the East was to colonize and rule. Now, of course, conditions are changing, and the West finds itself looking to the East for direction. As the East slowly comes into its own, Eastern influences can be found in Western music, film, clothing, and cuisine. And there are pockets of Western communities who are adopting traditional Eastern practices, such as yoga and meditation, as part of their daily ritual. Even alternative medicine, born and raised in the East, is finding a niche in the West. And Eastern culture has long been receptive and open to Western influences.

And so, dear reader, in spite of Kipling's immortal words that "never the twin shall meet," meet they have . . . and only time will tell what the next cultural influence will be.

Sincerely,

Bala Prasad

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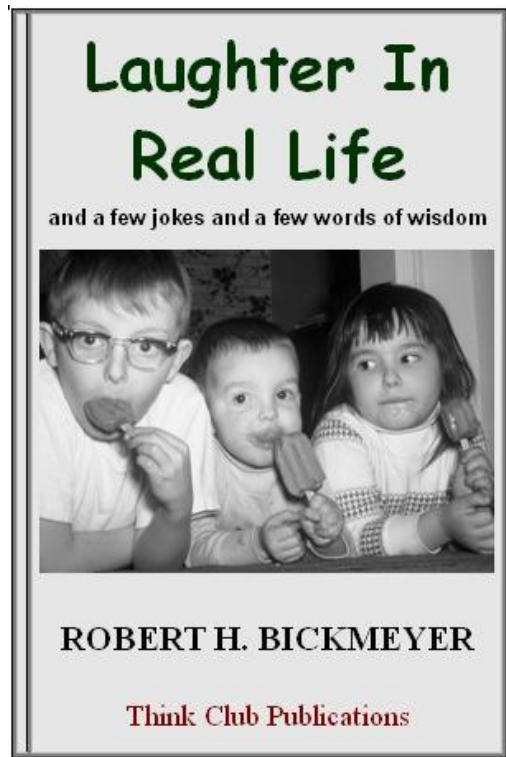
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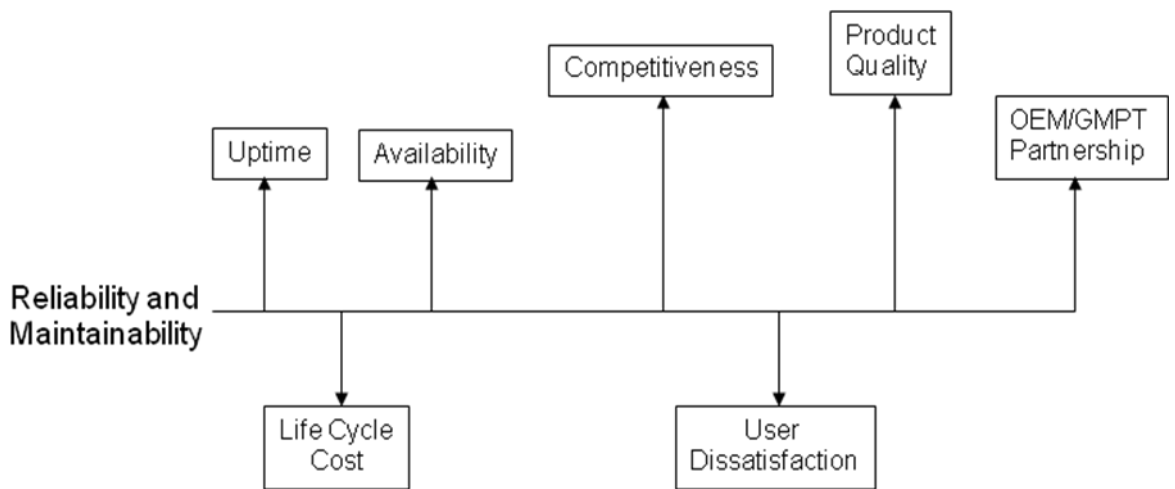
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