

~~bad~~ Jet

Gaides

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America and world Community

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Madness, Sin and Boredom: Life as a Wraith

not all - leave
you must have
room for the
exaggerated &
absurd actions?
enlightened (selfless)
beings.

This is a claim that all exaggerated emotions and absurd actions occur when one fantasizes the world as having no underlying reality (or no 'ocean of existence' or whatever else it may be called).

I am going to try to show how certain aspects of this fantastic world view are responsible for our fantastic or absurd world situation - this pre-war situation. I will close by contrasting this world view briefly with a world view that I think would not provoke exaggerated emotions and absurd actions.

Our world view is of permanent or unvarying definitions and we focus our attention on one particular definition - on our self-image or self-concept. This is an unconscious focusing of attention. We are not aware of doing this; we believe we are our self-image - we believe our self-image has a permanent reality. That is, we do not realize that we watch ourselves and mold our behavior - and therefore necessarily must be 'outside' our self-concept, viewing it as an object, as something with limits. We are unaware that the self-concept is a limited conception of our holistic being, i.e., a definition of our holistic being (and therefore arbitrarily distinguished as something less than the whole). That is, the degree of this compartmentalization of the 'being' is dependent only on the skill of the definers (a.k.a. ourselves and the environment).

Good

good thing? - I think you're right.

When we believe in the permanent reality of our self-image we are ignoring the fact that a self-image is an arbitrary distinction in which we arbitrarily distinguish ourselves, through the help of environmental conditioning? coercion, as 'this' but not 'that'. But that is not all we ignore. The attributes of the stable self-image (or the

I am not saying people have a precise, stagnant picture of themselves. I am saying that they have an unvarying general picture - a belief

particularities of the stable self-image) are expected outcomes (e.g. emotional states, talents) to interactions with the world. So, if the world is not stably defined then a person cannot react stably toward the world (and therefore will not have expected outcomes or be permanently defined as any stable self-image). Therefore, to believe in the permanent reality of our self-image we must also ignore the arbitrary nature of all definitions which make up our world view. Or we can say, we must believe in the permanent reality of our entire world view in order to believe in the permanent reality of the most important aspect of that world view - our self-image.

In other words, we selectively attend to information so that we can believe in the permanent reality of our self-image - a process I'll call selving. To make what I've said clearer and to explain why our self-concepts have become the most important aspects of our world view we must first understand selving clearly.

Selving is selectively attending to information so that a self-concept or self-image (something one relies on for identity and which determines one's behavior) can be created and maintained. This is not something only narcissists do. I think most of us do this and consider it a necessary contingent of living - maintaining a

that they will act in certain ways in certain situations. So, the specifics of their self-image change in different situations. But these specifics are accounted for in the general self-image. Moods are just different styles of a single, broad self-image, i.e..

- A narcissist actively pursues his image as an 'other.' A selver is not necessarily a narcissist (though selving is narcissistic in character). A selver is not necessarily aware of his image being an 'other.'

Actually "thinking" is the root of the illusion of the separate self, this is - attachment to conceptualization that "thingifies" flowing process into separate objects, perceived by a separated self. "Thinking" is "thinging." OK - you mention it. permanent image of ourselves which includes personality, likes and dislikes, and all the mess of emotional strains (but without realizing that we selectively attend to the world in specific ways to maintain that image).

How did the self-image become this focal-point, this most important aspect of our world view? A cartoon version of history (inaccurate but carrying a commendable load of truth) should help us understand.

A long time ago we had to ^{survive} (behave correctly) or be eaten by animals. There was no time to think. Then we learned some tricks for survival. This gave us time to sit around and think - we invented 'naming' (every and definitions one of which was the self. We stared at the self - very fascinating - Narcissus was born. To give us a solid feeling of a self-concept we used unwavering definitions to keep the waters of reality smooth (actually to create a reality) for us to enjoy ^{yes} our reflected images in. That is, definitions were used to create a world which is ordered, an illusion of permanency against which a self could be measured; only compartmentalized, mentally 'graspable' ideas were (and are) sought so as to maintain an illusion of permanent, solid reality. Materialism as an offshoot was born (because things are graspable, giving us a 'sense of reality' or permanency. ^{over}

So we grasp concepts and objects in order to vividly see our self in the world. But to objectify the world separates ^{a self} (ourselves) from the world (and separates 'ourselves' from our self-image), causing estrangement. So we become more interested in the self-image, trying to grasp it and reduce our estrangement (which only increases the objectification and estrangement). The harder we grasp, the less there is within our grasp as when one tries to squeeze water or air.

The grasping of selves is reflected in the English language as Dorothy Lee in Culture and Freedom demonstrates;

"Over the years, the English language has followed an analytic and isolating trend and it is possible that in linguistic reference there has been an increasing separation of the self from the encompassing situation. At any rate, delimitation of the self is reflected in our increasing analysis of holistic Anglo-Saxon terms referring to bodily acts. I beckon is becoming literary or at least cultivated, I gape is being replaced by phrases such as: with my mouth open. I say: I shake my fist, I bump my head; and how much is left of me, the self"(133).

My self(-image) is left a wraith surrounded by a body.

Once we have begun grasping at our selves and believing that we are our self-image, anything which forces us to question our self-definition (i.e. or image) would be considered an attack. And once we begin believing in our defined world, any sudden loss of confidence in our world's definitions would be considered the 'end of the world' (of which the self is a part - a double trauma). Therefore, we selectively attend to information to protect our world and ultimately our self-concept.

Good whose
From our self-protective perspective, intuitive concepts (i.e. the undefinable) are seen as wild beasts which must be thrown behind the fences of precise definition or trapped in cages of limiting metaphors to prevent them from slashing our self-concepts to bits. Now be agile and switch to another metaphor. we try to define intuitive concepts because the infinity of possibilities in undefined things makes us dizzy staring into an abyss of selflessness, unable to mentally grasp things for support (for even in a moment's space infinity crouches - (with a miserable smirk, sucking on watermelon)). *image weird*

See

So we avoid the undefined by believing only in our defined world, we often use definitions only to make things conform to our world.

We believe in the permanent reality of these essentially arbitrary definitions and are thereby blinded to the aspects of reality left out of these definitions. That is why many people in class were frustrated with your idea of the ocean of existence. They were blind to it. It is an intuitive concept - able to be ^(realized) understood only in its totality - requiring synthesis-thought, not defining, compartmentalizing thought, to be understood. The ocean is a concept too big to be grasped, too large to be encompassed by a definition. They were unwilling to peer into the undefined and feel the concept because that would have meant peering into an abyss of selflessness. *yes*

When self-concept threatening information comes from within we may try to repress the information. A selver seems to be always repressing, trying to keep his behavior conforming to his image. Selvers spend much time paving behavioral routines only to watch the pavement immediately bent and broken through by tendencies refusing to be repressed. *example?*

We selver also uses emotions as a protective device. Sometimes we create a mood and sometimes we enhance a mood, ^{and} ~~but with~~ the result ^{is} ~~being~~ protection of our self-image. An example of each:

Enhancing a mood: Let's consider the famous empty feeling. It may arise when one is not able to accomplish something one had hoped, or expected, one could do. It arises when one does not 'live up to one's self-image.' It is a feeling of not being able to grasp anything. We feel like a wraith - our self-concept is seen

This does not mean selvers cannot change their self-image. But a change in self-image is not recognized as being a redefining. Selvers are often trying to improve their image (and sometimes even worsen it). Any change is recognized as being an unveiling of abilities that had been hiding in their image. They retain belief in \wedge image throughout the change.

a permanent

to have no substance because the 'expected outcomes' have not occurred (i.e., the self-image attributes are not mentally graspable or recognizable). But we do not realize this (because, remember, we are not aware of the self-image being an 'other'). All we realize is this feeling of ungraspability, of emptiness. So, we try to grasp the feeling. We define the feeling to give it substance (thereby emphasizing it). We say, 'I feel depressed.' That houses the feeling to reduce the abysmal threat. That also defines our mood - giving us vivid self-image attributes once again.

very good ✓

Creating a mood: If a selver is feeling especially anxious a fellow selver may try to help out by saying 'relax.' What is meant by that? It means, 'there's nothing to be tense about.' In other words the fellow is saying, "I am seeing this situation in a way in which tension does not exist; try to find this way to look at the world so your anxiety will disappear." The implication is that the way one looks at the world, the way one defines the world, determines how one will feel about the world. In other words, one can define the world any way one likes - definitions are arbitrary. Aaaahhh, panick, the end of the world, the abyss of selflessness, the infamous identity crises. The selver still concentrates on his defined world and self image but can no longer believe in their permanent reality (because they are merely arbitrary). Suddenly the responsibility for the selver's life is in his/her own hands; the selver dizzily weaves at the edge of the abyss and then steps back into the accustomed pain of helplessness. Now anger is created to scare away the poor fellow who said 'relax.' (More on that in a moment). Self-pity (or some other emotion) is now created to re-

yes

store the vividness, the illusion of permanency (for self-pity is mourning over one's self(-image) which is impossible to do unless one has a vivid self-image to mourn over).

✓ Anger is always a protective device. In fact, one must selve in order to be angry. For how can one feel slighted unless one steps out to view the slighting? If I had no solid image which could be attacked I would have no reason to get angry.

For what exactly is anger? An angry person momentarily loses sight of his defined world. He watches his self-image being attacked by certain aspects of his world (which could even be inanimate aspects such as mathematical formulas, grammatical rules or chairs). The definitions of these aspects are momentarily changed (i.e. they become enemies and the inanimate aspects becoming animate enemies). These definitions change because they are subordinate to the most important definition - the self-image. This is an extreme of selving in which one actually hallucinates - sees a reality that exists only for oneself. One is truly wraith-like then (for a wraith is a mad ghost who lives half in the live world and half in the world beyond). An angry person is reacting to things in his personal fantasy world and acting in the underlying reality of the interpersonal world.

actually
it is all
hallucination
from the
point of
view of
the self

3rd

For instance, I am a selver. I get mad when I stub my toe on a chair leg. In my dignified self-image there can be no clumsy fool. I have just stubbed my toe: suddenly the chair is no longer inanimate - it is my enemy trying to disturb my self-image. I am temporarily insane - not in contact with an underlying, inter-related reality - living in a fantasy world where my self-concept

is an object needing protection and where chairs are enemies. My actions will be like those of a person half-asleep destroying his alarm clock in self-defence (i.e. after having perceived its buzzing as a threat).

In other words, selvers do absurd things because they are half-conscious of the underlying reality of the universe. They exaggerate the import of situations because they see no underlying reality with which to keep things in perspective. Different aspects of the underlying reality are emphasized by using words such as world community, God or the ocean of existence. Let's see how stupid a selver's actions appear when reflected against an underlying reality such as the world community.

A world community is the interconnectedness of all things. Our role in the world community is the part we play in the earth's ecosystem. Part of that role is our treatment of one another, and the treatment of nations towards each other - the international community. One result of the selving process is the very concoction of the term world community when international community would be more honest. The concoction of this term reflects that we don't realize the reality of the world we're living in. Both as nations and as individuals we storm around as madmen with hallucinations. Our acts are not those of a creature who understands it lives in a true world community. Possibly our acts (like the creation of nuclear weapons) are sensible in our hallucinated world but are absurd when viewed from the world community.

Mistreating definitions, relying on definitions to create a safe abode for our self-concept, is not a necessary contingent of living.

From the perspective of an underlying reality, the selver is solipsistic. He would have to remove himself from the supreme position of the universe if he wanted to behave less absurdly. He would have to believe in more than himself. He would have to believe in an underlying reality.

Actually "he" would have to truly disappear as a "self" to truly →

Right now a selver would want me to prove that there is an underlying reality. I will avoid ^{that} pit-hole by reminding him that an underlying reality is an intuitive concept and therefore could never be proven to someone who is unwilling to leave definitions behind and feel his understanding. That does not mean abandoning definitions forever but simply that one would not mistreat these essential tools of living. One should be a non-selver.

what is the emphasis here? on "should" (no, no) or "be" (yes, yes)

A non-selver focuses on the underlying reality. He does not say, "I am this", he says, "I do this." He is aware of the arbitrary nature of definitions. He does not pursue extreme conceptual definitions (such as goodness or freedom) as if these things had a permanent substance. because he does not have a permanent definition of such concepts. He does not, as selvers do, try to make a good world by outrunning or ignoring bad. He understands the plural nature of the universe, and that to know pure goodness one must know pure badness (because there can only be good in relation to bad). He must understand a concept similar to the ocean of existence which from a selver's perspective is a soup of conceptual opposites (in the way a soup is a transcendence of its ingredients (where, for example, the salt and pepper and whatever are dissolved and a part of the whole thing)).

Yes, people are capable of being non-selvers (and in fact selvers may even be non-selvers for limited periods of time as when one plays

yes in sex, sports, etc -
 the piano and 'loses himself in the music.'). The Wintu Indians, as one example, seem to have been non-selvers. (There are no more Wintu's ... I think).

The Wintu understood the arbitrariness of the definitions:

"The Wintu never asserts the truth as absolute, as we do when we say it is. In one of the common stories about the German, the Frenchman and the Englishman, the first two, pointing to bread, say, 'I call it Brot,' and 'I call it pain'; but the Englishman says, 'I call it bread and it is bread.' The Wintu never say it is bread. They say, 'It looks to me bread' or 'It feels to me bread' or 'I-have-heard-it-to-be-bread' or 'I-infer-from-evidence-that-it-is-bread' or 'I-think-it-to-be-bread,' or, vaguely and timelessly, 'according-to-my-experience-be bread.' The statement is made about the other, the bread, but with the implication that its validity is limited by the specified experience of the speaker." (137).

The Wintu are non-selvers:

"Wintu philosophy in general has no law of contradiction. Where we have mutually exclusive dualistic categories, the Wintu have categories which are inclusive, but not mutually so; that is, object A will be included in object B, but not vice-versa. Out of this context, B can be distinguished or emphasized through various linguistic devices. For example, in Wintu thought, man is included in nature; natural law, timeless order, is basic and true, irrespective of man. However, independent judgement, private experience and free-will are not thereby excluded, but function transiently within the framework of natural law; man actualizes and gives temporality and concreteness to the natural order upon which he impinges - through act of will and personal intent.

Again, the generic is primary to the particular and includes it; the individual is particularized transiently, but is not set in opposition" (131-132).

"The Wintu conception of self then differs from our own in that it contains the total person and all its aspects and that it fades out gradually and without distinct demarcations" (137).

The Wintu, a non-selver, is not a wraith; *they* sees an underlying reality with which to keep *their* actions and emotions in perspective. To top it off, they probably don't experience as much boredom as selvers do. (if you'll accept my definition of boredom). Because *they* don't have a self separated from the world, they find more

meaning in life (which I define as understanding of the interconnectedness of the world - the soul's food). Therefore they feel less boredom (which I define as the soul's hunger pangs).

Final note: Nationalism is tribal narcissism. The harder we protect our interests the stronger we define, or concentrate on, our objectified nation selves, and the stronger, then, we are opposed to other nation selves and their national interests. The political world is a collection of nation-images threatening one another in a fantasy adventure. Nonselving nations would probably still have wars but they would not be the result of exaggerated emotions and therefore would not lead to absurd actions (like the dropping of nuclear weapons).

Jeff - This is a brilliant paper, very deep and also enjoyable reading. You have definitely seen through the illusion of separation and very ingeniously removed all

*quotes from: Lee, Dorothy Freedom and Culture
Prentice Hall, Inc. USA. 1959.*

consequences in behavior and thinking of the self-concept. Most of my comments are in the margins and back of pages. How much of this is your own inspiration and way of seeing the world? I wondered if you were familiar with the writings of Alan Watts, Chogyon Trungpa or Ken Wilber, who also write incisively on other questions. The big question of

you now is - what good is this information
to you in your life? Are you
willing to live the truth of self-knowledge
on your reality? you know, once you
get intellectual understanding, the next step
is to incarnate the word - and of course
this involves the continual letting go of
self, the practice of deep surrender to
the greater ^{reality} in which you're here, and
which animates your very existence.
Our ultimate identity exists prior to self,
and it takes courage to see what we
truly are - you might enjoy my
next Transformation Workshop (which begins
in late January).

Goin - I enjoyed & was very
stimulated by this excellent paper.
Best wishes, Letta Laide

A+