

# MY PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE



When I was a boy I hiked a lot in the Sierra mountains. One of my favorite places was Desolation Valley near Lake Tahoe. Camping next a pristine lake with canopy of thousands of stars in the sky over head provoked a lot of wondering. Men and women have been looking up and wondering about their place in the universe and what it is all about for thousands of years. And at 76, I still don't know the answer. I do know that the universe is beyond huge and contemplating it makes me feel insignificant.

When you see a graphic of the sun and the solar system, the proportions are way off. The sun is 100 times the diameter of the earth. 1.3 million earths could fit inside of the sun. The sun is 800,000 miles in diameter, so if the earth were at the center of the sun, the surface of the sun would be 1.5 times past the moon. The Sun makes up 99.86% of the mass of the Solar System. And it's the Earth and other planets and asteroids which make the most of that remaining .14% of the Solar System.

The earth is 25,000 miles around and 7000 miles in diameter. From the deepest oceans to the highest mountains is only 12 miles. If the earth was the size of a bowling ball, the surface

would be smooth. The oceans would be wet spots. If you held it, it is unlikely that you would even feel thunderstorms or hurricanes. Perhaps there would be tinkling in the palms.

The earth is 93, 000,000 miles from the sun. Viewed from the sun, the earth is less the size of the period at the end of this sentence. From outside the solar system, the earth is less significant than one grain of sand on all the beaches on earth.

The sun in our sky is in an undistinguished part of the universe (the outskirts of the Virgo Supercluster) in an undistinguished galaxy (the Milky Way) in an undistinguished region (the Orion Arm).

And there are 400 billion suns in the Milky Way Galaxy. And there are hundreds of billions of galaxies. Astronomers have recently discovered a star 9 billion light years from Earth.

Many of the observations of the universe are made by scientists analyzing the electromagnetic spectrum which includes radio, microwave through far infrared, visible light, ultraviolet, x-rays, gamma rays, and high energy gamma rays. Scientists are now beginning to measure gravitational waves in black holes using instruments so sensitive that they will measure vibrations the size 1/1000th the nucleus of an atom. The reason I am mentioning this is that it occurred to me that the ability to measure things beyond an entity's ability to biologically perceive them would be a good criteria for determining intelligent life elsewhere in the universe.

If I take the perspective of me on earth from the end of the milky way galaxy or from a galaxy thousands or billions of galaxies away, my existence and mankind's existence can only be viewed as inconsequential. If you look at the cosmos as whole you wouldn't even know that the earth ever existed. So if I look at my place in the universe from the perspective of size, I am less than insignificant. And yes, I realize that my body has atoms from the big bang 13 billion years ago, so I am part of the universe. See [Astrophysics For Those in a Hurry](#).

If the earth were the size of bowling ball, my 6'3" body would be proportionally less a micro.

So how about going the other way. What is my body compared to the smallest particle known? The average human's size compared to the universe's size is actually larger than the human size compared to a Planck scale, that is the size where classical physics stop working and only quantum physics is applicable. This means that there are particles that if scaled up to a meter would make my scale larger than the entire known universe. There are particles in us that are smaller compared to us than we are compared to the entire universe.

The other remarkable thing is that we, or at least the cosmologists, have learned such an incredible lot about the universe in just the last 100 years. One hundred years ago, we did not know that other galaxies existed. Now we know that there are billions and that there may even be multi-universes.

Some think that our consciousness is creating a “cosmic consciousness”. “This consciousness shows the cosmos to consist not of dead matter governed by unconscious, rigid, and unintended law; it shows it on the contrary as entirely immaterial, entirely spiritual and entirely alive; it shows that death is an absurdity, that everyone and everything has eternal life; it shows that the universe is God and that God is the universe, and that no evil ever did or ever will enter into it; a great deal of this is, of course, from the point of view of selfconsciousness, absurd; it is nevertheless undoubtedly true.” (Bucke) No, it is absurd. And it is not true just because you say it is. This is akin to Tertullian, an early Christian author who said, “I believe because it is absurd”, Which in its capacity for rationalization is something like the Guinness World Record: with that attitude, you can rationalize any idiocy ever imagined, and the sillier it is, the more reason you have to believe it. Ken Wilber’s The Religion of Tomorrow.

To me, it is the height of arrogance to think that the gelatinous blob in our skulls has some degree of significance and influence on the universe or that the universe does not exist and that our consciousness, which is eternal, does. Carl Sagan calls this the human centered conceit. Prior to sentient life on earth there was no consciousness. And you can say, well “How do you know it is not otherwise?” And to this I say, “I don’t, but neither do you”.

That being said.....

There is such a thing as Panpsychism, which postulates that the universe is conscious. And there are people who believe this and use current astrophysics and quantum physics to speculate about it. I am really annoyed by those who use the language of current physics such as particle theory and non locality to make shit up about spirituality and our place in whatever we are in. Deepak Chopra and Gregg Braden are examples of this. They promote spiritual ideas and move into nonsense language such as “pure potentiality”. (Google this for a meaningless definition.) It reminds me of the Wittgenstein’s quote that “when philosophical problems arise, language goes on a holiday.”

I attended a ten day Vipassana meditation retreat about ten years ago and again this last September. During my first retreat, I came to the very profound realization, at my core, that the only certainty is change. It was so profound for me that I cried. It is the only thing that I can say is true; that everything is changing every microsecond. And to know something, anything, with

certainty was very meaningful. We all look for certainty in the mystery. Some through religion, and some through science and some through pure intuition.

Our planet and all of what we have created will disappear, perhaps in a supernova. And even more stupendous, the universe itself is expanding and will eventually become totally dormant according to all cosmological calculations.

And so in the final analysis, nothing matters. It is totally impersonal. And, paradoxically, everything matters to me, right now.

So all of the above is the logical and rational evidence-based thinking Bruce pontificating. As you will see in future blogs, there may be more to it when exploring subjective realms.

From so many years ago being awed in Desolation Valley, I am now awed by the images from the Hubble Telescope with such things as the The Pillars of Creation Galaxy.

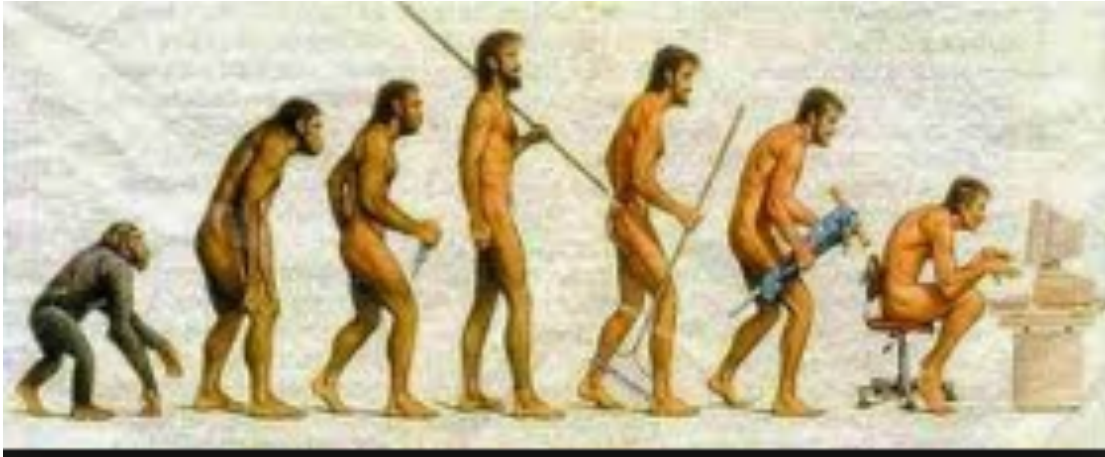
The beauty is breathtaking and mystical. So from my perspective there is something sacred about the universe.

To learn more about the universe just search Google. This TED talk will give you a [20 minute history of the universe](#).

Here is a remarkable creation story written by 11 year old granddaughter Cassie Anderson. [A Creation Story](#)



# MY PLACE IN HISTORY AND TIME



No, I am not saying that I am an historical figure. I was born at a particular time and place and, as Michael Crichton says in his book Timeline, the most significant impact on how you live your life, is the past; when you are born and of course where.

I can't fathom 13.8 billion years which is the age of the universe. However, I have learned that modern humans, with language and tools, evolved around 70,000 years in what is called the cognitive revolution. The agricultural revolution started only about 12000 years ago and the scientific revolution only 500 years ago. [Read Sapiens to get the full story.](#)

Prior to 70.000 years ago, there were other human species as well as homo sapiens, which is our species of hominids. In March 2016, studies were published that suggest that modern humans bred with hominids, including Denisovans and Neanderthals. This is why many humans, including me, have Neanderthal DNA in our genome. I am going to talk about evolution in other blogs. Enough to say, that evolutionary theory is supported by overwhelming scientific evidence. So modern humans come from evolutionary processes and not that long ago there were multiple human species. So, what does that say about the idea that we are special? And in whose eyes are we special? Am I special?

About 109 billion humans have been alive since the dawn of man. I was born in 1942 along with 1,767,482 other humans in the US. So, by birthday on February 19th, about 242,000 babies had been born in the U.S. I figure that my twin brother Gordon and I were number 242, 0001 and 242, 002. The US population at that time was 135 million and there was about 2 billion people

on the planet. Now there are over 7.5 billion. Only 62% of us born in the U.S. that year are still alive. And when I die, I will join 150,000 of my fellow humans who will die that day.

I was born an identical twin with older sister Gail of Lee and Frances Anderson whose ancestors were all Northern European, mostly Scottish and German. Last year I wrote my parents' biography. It was a joy to work on it and to get the context for the lives they lived. If you would like to see it, [here it is](#).

I was born in the midst of a World War II; the biggest most destructive war in the history of mankind. 60 million people died, 3% of the population. In the 20th Century, there were over 160 Million human beings killed through war, genocide and murder by other human beings. This is a staggering number, and a testimony to the complexity of the human condition. The good news is that the first 18 years of the 21st century has not had that kind of devastation, although humans now have the capability of obliterating the entire civilization of the planet with billions of people dying.

Here is a 1996 letter to my son Barry and my parents and the [WWII generation](#).

While born during a war, war did not impact me significantly. I have led a blessed life with a higher standard of living than 99.9% of humans who have ever lived.

I have never been hungry. I have not been ravaged by disease. I have led a relatively economically stable life. I have never truly needed or wanted for anything that was significant. The important material things in life have always come my way. I have not been subjected to violence. And... I am not rich but certainly not poor. I have been treated well due to luck and circumstance. That's it. Pretty amazing for 76 years.

The Buddhists say that the quality of your life has been influenced by the "karma" that you generated in your previous life. If so, my previous life generated an incredible amount of generous positive karma.

One's life also is influenced by the station into to which one is born. Station in this context means societal rank and position, including economic status. I was born into a family of doctors. My father was a doctor as was his father. He had an established medical practice in Jackson Heights New York City. During his lifetime my father provided for us in New York City, during the war and after the war in California where we moved when I was 4 years old. We were not rich, although people thought we were. All doctors were thought to be wealthy.



So, I grew up in a family of smart educated people and was expected to go to college and continue at the station that I was born into and I have basically done that.

During my lifetime, some terrible things have happened in the world and there have also been wonderful things. Amidst wars and famine there has been an ever-evolving level of prosperity. While there are still many poor and many hungry, fewer people are starving in the world than ever before. Many of the major plagues and epidemics of the past are no more. Modern science has eliminated them. More on that in a later blog.

In addition to an overall increase in the well-being of people, there are fewer people who are oppressed in totalitarian societies and monarchies. And for me, born in the United States, a free and democratic country...well, another example of how I have been blessed.

I don't know how much longer the human race will continue to exist, but I do know that our time is finite. And of course, so am I.

So, where do you fit into history and time? Do you have the same perspective as I do? Have you been more fortunate or less fortunate?

# DOES THE HUMAN RACE HAVE A PURPOSE?



Why am I here? Does the universe have a purpose and does the purpose include us? "I'm not sure," says Neil DeGrasse Tyson. "But anyone who expresses a more definitive response to the question is claiming access to knowledge not based in empirical foundations. This remarkably persistent way of thinking, common to most religions and some branches of philosophy, has failed badly in past efforts to understand and thereby predict the operations of the universe and our place within in." So, we simply don't know.

"We live in an uncaring universe. Any idea that it was created for our felicity must be nonsense, for each wonder to which we may point is countered by a monstrosity. To believe in the anthropic principle, that the world was created to serve us, in the face of so much suffering, is absurd, indeed it is narcissistic, even infantile." - Peter Sellick

So how about the purpose of the human race. Does a fish or a giraffe have a purpose, other than to propagate their species? Do humans have a special place among animals and therefore have a purpose?

Well I asked my friend David King about this.

That's easy. In my humble opinion, the human race (species) has no purpose, nor does any other species. We alone fret about "purpose" just as we fret about life after death



because our development of a complex system of symbols (language) gave us the ability to contemplate things and events beyond the immediate here and now. Another question: Why is there a universe? I haven't a clue. Nor do I have a clue about the possibility that there is some creative force or being that's responsible for the whole thing. Of this I am pretty sure: We are the only species that contemplates these questions. Does that make us special? I doubt it. Without language, we'd just be another great ape.

There is more than to this of course. How about meaning? All of us are searching for meaning. Perhaps we are providing meaning to the universe rather than the universe providing meaning to us. When we see a beautiful galaxy, we are giving it meaning. Without humans it would not be beautiful. Plato might disagree in that he thought that beauty existed "apriori"; that it could be deduced without observation. I tend to believe that prior to humans, there was no beauty. We provide the meaning to the Universe.

And of course, it is a great mystery and as Joseph Campbell says the "mystery of being is beyond all categories of thought."

In looking at these big questions about my place in the universe, my place in time, and the purpose of human race, I realize that, while providing context, it does little else. While the universe may be impersonal, we are not. We are providing meaning and purpose to our own lives. It is not necessary for meaning or purpose to come from outside of us.

So, is there a purpose beyond you?

Is there meaning beyond you?

The picture below is a photograph of earth and moon from the rings of Saturn. Saturn is 890 million miles from earth. Multiply that by 100000 And you wouldn't even get out of the Milky Way galaxy. And there are billions of galaxies.

# EVIDENCE BASED THINKING



## DEMAND EVIDENCE AND THINK CRITICALLY

There are two ways of thinking. One is objective logical and facts-based way of thinking and the other is subjective intuitive emotional way of thinking. I'll call the first a thinker and a second an intuitor feeler. My sense is that each individual defaults primarily to one type or the other, with the other type certainly present but to a lesser degree. One has their rational skills dominant and the other has their intuitive skills dominant. It also depends on the how our opinions have been formed. The book [The Righteous Mind](#) states that most of our strong opinions about things are brought about by unconscious cultural processes and that we use facts and logic to then justify them. And, we can be logical and factual around some things and very emotional and intuitive and anti-factual about others. I realize that it is complicated. And of course, however one gets to one's "truth" is right for them. But it does not make them actually right, particularly when they ignore facts.

But, as you will find as we go along in this blog, my default is toward an objective fact-based approach to thinking about things. And....I have as much bias as the next guy. I guess. And if you see bias in my writing, I invite you to challenge me.

The scientific method and evidence-based thinking has brought mankind into the modern world and expanded knowledge and ability to improve the quality of our lives beyond measure.

Anti-science thinking generated by other underlying motivations which are not factual or logical are bad. Examples are:

### **Climate Change**

- Denying climate change because of an unwillingness to address the economic costs of to address its issues.

### **Evolution**

- Denying evolutionary theory and a geological record with the adoption of an anti-evolution regime because it contradicts the creation story in the Bible. [Here](#) is Biblical case for the Earth being 6000 years old. Pretty weird. You can decide whether the Earth is 6000 years old or 4.5 billion years old.

### **Vaccinations**

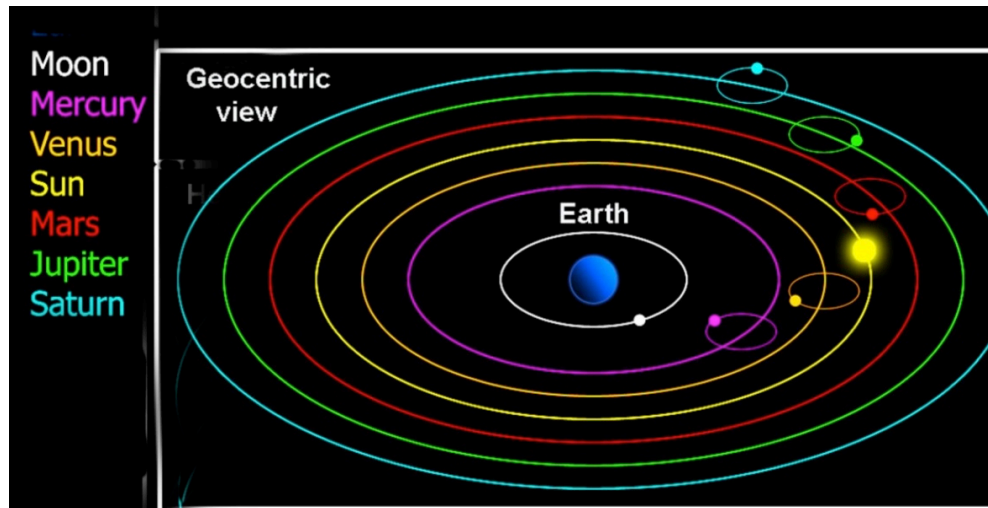
- Being anti-vaccination because of a totally discredited article was submitted (and now withdrawn) to a medical journal whose author lost his medical license. Said article tied vaccinations with autism. The consequences are that there are now unnecessary [outbreaks of measles](#).

### **Genetically Modified Foods**

- Being anti-GMO even though there is absolutely no evidence that consuming GMO foods has a negative impact on health. The position of anti GMO advocates is that the evidence has not yet been proven GMO's to be safe, even though humans have been consuming genetically modified foods for hundreds of years. In fact, [over 2000 studies](#) have found GM food to be perfectly safe.

These are just a few examples of where evidence, facts and the [scientific method](#) are not considered when positions are taken. Opinions treated as facts are still just opinions. And if facts are ignored while only opinions and feelings are used to make decisions, then I have an issue.

# THE FALSE FOUNDATIONAL PREMISE



Some ways of thinking are good and useful. Other ways of thinking are flawed. One factor in flawed thinking is when it's based on a false foundational premise.

A premise is an assumption upon which an argument or system of thinking is built. An example is the premise that some types of bacteria can cause disease.

A foundational premise is essential to our way of thinking about something. If the premise that the bacteria causes disease is false, the entire structure around our thinking about infectious diseases would crumble.

Here are a couple of examples False Foundational Premises to further clarify what I'm talking about.

## FALSE FOUNDATION PREMISE ONE

***The earth is the center of the universe. The sun, planets and stars go around the earth.***

This premise was held by man from ancient times to the middle ages. Calculations could be made of the movement of planets; the sun and moon and these calculations were consistent even though the foundational premise was false. This foundational premise was a part of biblical theology of the Catholic church.

Then along comes the astronomer Copernicus in the early 1500's, who proved otherwise. The earth and planets revolved around the Sun. Did the Church say thanks and shift their theology? No. In the Bible, Joshua commanded the sun to stand still and

not the earth. Critics claimed "the evidence of the senses, the thousand-year consensus of men of science, and the authority of the Bible" makes it wrong.

In the early 1600's, Galileo then furthered the work of Copernicus and the Church demanded he

".. .abandon completely... the opinion that the sun stands still at the center of the world and the earth moves, and henceforth not to hold, teach, or defend it in any way whatever, either orally or in writing."

They then tried him for heresy and put him in prison.

## **FALSE FOUNDATIONAL PREMISE TWO**

***The movement and position of the planets has an influence on individual lives and human events.***

This premise had been around since 2000 BC. Astrology has been part of a scholarly tradition, and in academic and political circles up until the Twentieth Century. However, following the wide-scale adoption of the scientific method, astrology has been challenged successfully on both theoretical and experimental grounds, and has been shown to have *no scientific validity or explanatory power*. It is a foundational premise that is false.

That being said, surveys show that 25% of Westerners continue to believe that the movement of planets affect their individual lives.

A number of years ago I read [Cosmos and Psyche: Intimations of a New World View](#) by Richard Tarnas. Here is my review.

This book is deeply flawed. Its foundational premise is utter nonsense. Tarnas has used his vast understanding of the humanities and history and attempted to correlate trends, themes, biographies and events to the movement of planets.

Like all astrologers, he is attempting to merge the scientific and factual using his intuition, seeing correlations and causes and effects when none exist. The intuitive connection between the scientific facts and the "facts" of history simply does not work. The supposed correlations are simply subjective conjecture. And in the final analysis, the overarching question is "so what?".

I found the book very disappointing in light of his brilliant [Passion of the Western Mind](#).

Now for those who believe in Astrology, the web offers lots of opportunities to get a reading. Try this [website](#). You will get a reading that will tell you a lot of contradictory information about yourself and will be of little value.

So, what is my point? The lesson here is that when you challenge someone's foundational premise as false, get ready for a fight. Facts and evidence may not do the trick.

In my next blog I will discuss two more false foundational premises.

Meanwhile, ask yourself. Do I have any false foundational premises?

Do you see others basing a whole way of thinking on a false foundational premise?



# FALSE FOUNDATION PREMISE-PART TWO



In our continuing discussion of the false foundational premise, here are two more.

## FALSE FOUNDATIONAL PREMISE THREE

***The Bible is the living word of God and should be obeyed.***

The Bible was written by 40 men. The old testament was written beginning in 400 BC. The new testament was written beginning about 15 years after Jesus died.

The men who wrote the Bible believed that when bad things happened which people didn't understand, God was angry, or God works in mysterious ways. These bad things included disease and natural disasters. They believed that when good things happened which they did not understand, they were miracles from God. Now, one has to realize that in those times people didn't understand a whole lot.

They were men of their times and they did not understand a fraction of what we understand today, such as:

- How the human body works
- How the weather works and what causes hurricanes
- The causes of diseases and as a result the treatment of disease
- Earthquakes and tsunamis
- Biology and biological history of creatures on Earth
- Geology and geological history
- Celestial events such as meteor showers, eclipses and supernovas.

[The Bible is replete with historical, geographical and scientific errors, as well as contradictions.](#)

God's values, as revealed by the Bible, are not compatible with our value system today. He is an angry vengeful killer. God tells a man to kill his son. He demonstrates his love for Man by allowing his son to be tortured and killed. He tells the elders to stone a woman who was found to be a non-virgin on her wedding night. He ripped babies out of the wombs of women. He threatens to lay waste to towns and kill everyone including children. Slavery is permissible and it's OK to beat the slave and even kill them. It's forbidden for women to have power over or even teach men anything. And the most perplexing for me, God is so needy that he tells man that he must worship and obey him, or he will kill him. The Bible is a very violent book.

Now the New Testament portrays a loving God, although if you don't believe in Jesus you are going to be tortured for eternity. And I understand there are many passages in both the Old and New Testaments that convey great wisdom and provide solace for those who believe. The values expressed by Jesus are wonderful.

The Bible might be the inspiration of men who believed in God, however it is not the word of God, nor should one obey all of its tenants.

*"Religious traditions portray holy books as the 'word of God'. But God doesn't speak to us. God is the primal silence that speaks through us. All words are human words and conditioned by the human experience of living in time. They are at best partial expressions of a truth that can never be articulated. There is no 'word of God', but if there were it would be only one word. And that word is 'love'."* [Tim Freke](#)

So, my contention is that the Foundational Premise that the **Bible is the living word of God and should be obeyed** is false.

Now when you are talking to someone who believes that the Bible is the word of God, you will find that they justify their view by quoting the Bible; just the good parts. There is no other way they can have a discussion because that foundational view is essential to their thinking. No wonder you are going to get a fight.

#### **FALSE FOUNDATIONAL PREMISE FOUR**

***A rationalistic scientific way of thinking is the only way to the truth of reality.***

Ha! Bet you did not see that coming. Is it false? Hell, I don't know. A term for this way of thinking is physicalism. The premise is that all reality is based on material things.

Am I willing to examine whether or not it is false? Of course.

So, what are your thoughts on the Bible?

Am I being too harsh or am I just calling it the way it is?

# PHYSICALISM



In the last blog, I stated that the premise that a rationalistic scientific way of thinking is the only way to the truth of reality is false.

Physicalism is the premise that the real world only consists simply of the physical world. Physicalists don't deny that the world might contain many items that at first glance don't seem physical — items of a biological, or psychological, or moral, or social nature. But they insist nevertheless that at the end of the day such items are either physical or depend on the physical. And that, theoretically, given enough time, physicists and scientists will be able to explain everything using physical laws.

The basic idea is we human beings are nothing more than exceedingly complicated biological machines . Consciousness is generated by physiological events and processes in our brains.

So how does one explore whether this foundational premise is false? I am going to look at three ways in future blog posts.

Consciousness-subjective experience

Parapsychology, ie ESP, mind reading, mediums and such

Spiritual experience of religious and non-religious people

Let me begin with a perspective. A few years ago I wrote a book called the Leadership Mastery Map. It categorized leadership subjects according to Ken Wilber's All Qual Model. The model is a simple but powerful way to explain reality.

## The Leadership Mastery Map™



Two dichotomies emerge from this model: individual versus collective, and subjective versus objective. By using a 2x2 matrix, we can include all perspectives reality.

The upper left is individual interior subjective which includes inner values, beliefs and internal dynamics, including consciousness.

The lower left quadrant is the collective interior subjective. It is shared values and beliefs of the family, tribe, or nation or any other group.

The upper right quadrant is the exterior individual objective. It consists of one's physical body and one's behavior. When a doctor exams you, they are in the upper right quadrant. When you are talking about feelings and beliefs to a psychologist, you are in the upper left quadrant.

The lower right quadrant encompasses everything in the external world.

Physicalism only looks at the right side of the model, the external objective. In this way it is called reductionist. Some say it does not look at reality from a holistic perspective.

Go to [www.leadershipmasterymap.com](http://www.leadershipmasterymap.com) for the online version of the book . Or buy on [Amazon](http://Amazon). And if you really are into it, go to my talk on [Integral Coaching](#) which explains the model.

One more thing. If you really want to begin to understanding the mentality of those who focus on the right quadrants (objective) to those who focus on the upper left quadrant (subjective) go to this fascinating [dialogue](#) between of a physicalist and a spiritual person. Richard Dawkins, biologist and atheist and Satish Kumar, a spiritual teacher and environmental activist have a robust conversation about reality.

Begin at 2.42 when they start talking about spiritual trees and rocks. Listen to how the different perspectives play out.

So how holistically do you look at the world?

While you do reside in all four quadrants, do you put more credibility in one quadrant than the other?



# CONSCIOUSNESS



Knock knock, who is inside of you? You have an experience of being you. You have an internal experience of “me”. You experience feelings when aroused. You are in awe of beauty. You have thoughts, opinions and beliefs. You create and visualize the future. You react internally to the world in hundreds of subjective ways. Some refer this to this as qualia. Some say that consciousness as formless. It is the part of you that is self aware. Buddhists call it pure awareness. Others call it consciousness.

The “I”, the knowing with which our experience is known, has remained present throughout your life. In that sense “you”, the awareness of you, has not changed.

What is consciousness? And, can it be explained by a physicalist?

“Does consciousness exist outside of the brain/body?. Did consciousness exist 5 million years ago?

The false premise that we are examining is.

***A rationalistic scientific way of thinking is the only way to the truth of reality.***

To the first question, the physicalist would say we don’t know right now, but we will be able to explain it. What we do know is that consciousness and all subjective experience arises from and is dependent on the body and the human body is physical.

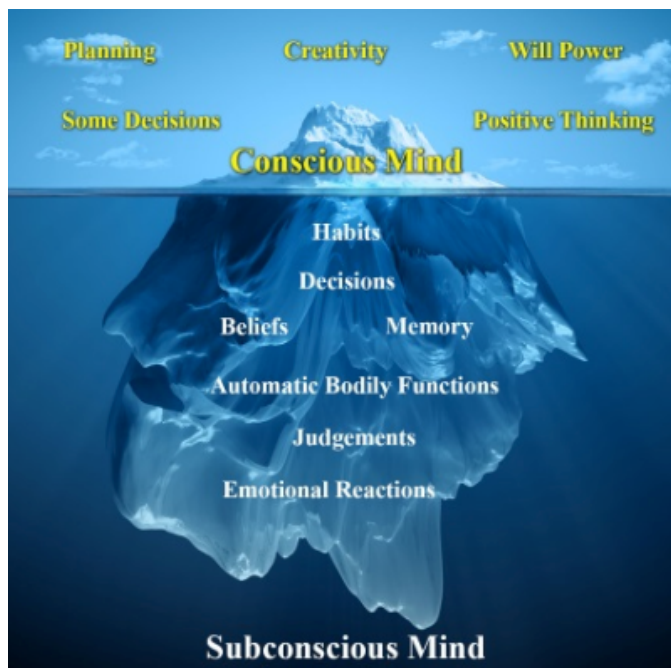
To the second question the physicist would say that being that there were no human bodies one million years ago, there was no consciousness. Consciousness does not exist outside of the body.

The challenge for the scientist is that that nothing we know about the brain and physics explains consciousness; the subjective experience of “I”.

Consciousness can't be explained neurologically. Some scientists are exploring whether there may be an answer at the quantum level to explain consciousness. But most think that is a pretty far fetched. The quantum level is millions of time smaller than a neuron and there does not seem to be any more of a quantum connection to neurons and the brain than to other material things.

Now we become unconsciousness though sleep or anesthesia. And neurological scientists can stimulate the neocortex to take us out of consciousness. The brainwaves are there, but there is no integration providing a structure that apparently is required for consciousness. And that does not really get to any explanation of the experience of love, or beauty.

And how about the subconscious, that part of our consciousness of which we not aware? Scientists have not come even close to providing a neurological explanation of this.



So consciousness is still a mystery. And if consciousness is special, and we humans seems to think it is, then the fact that it has evolved in the last few thousands of years is a big deal, regardless of how infinitesimal we are in the universe. The Universe is now becoming conscious of itself. And, maybe this is the only time that it has done so.

Perhaps aspects of consciousness may not be physically based. And, if not physically based, will survive the dissolution of the body. Perhaps there are individuals who

can see a reality beyond physical.

I will explore this concept in the next blog under the name nonduality.

So. do you agree that the understanding of consciousness, your consciousness, might be a factor in proving the premise false?

# NON DUALITY



Have you ever fallen in love with being alive? A number of years ago I was hiking on [Tequille Island](#) in Lake Titicaca, Peru. As I approach a vista from the trail, I had this exquisite feeling of aliveness. I felt connected to everything far beyond my physical body. There was a sense of oneness. Non Duality describes an experience where your state of consciousness shifts and your sense of self falls away to something larger and expansive.

Non duality primarily refers to a state of consciousness, in which the dichotomy of I-other is 'transcended', and awareness is described as 'centerless' and 'without dichotomies'. Although this state of consciousness appears spontaneous for me, it usually is the "result" of prolonged meditative/contemplative practice. One can also experience nondualism through a Near Death Experience or psychedelic drugs. Perhaps you've experienced the sense of oneness at a time in your life: perhaps a lot.

The essential discovery of all the great spiritual traditions, including Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen, Sufism, Kashmir Shaivism and Judaism, is that experience is not divided into a perceiving subject, an entity known as 'I,' and a perceived object, world or other. There is a Oneness.

Rather than quoting spiritual teachers, here are quotes from physicists.

Einstein said that *“reality is an illusion all be a persistent one. Space and time are modes in which we think, not conditions in what we live.”*

Werner Heisenberg, Nobel prize winning physicist stated, *“The universe is not only stranger than we think, it is stranger than we can think”.*

Erwin Schrödinger, Nobel prize winning physicist stated, *“ We do not belong to this material world that science constructs for us. We are not inside, we are outside. We are spectators. The reason we think that we are inside in the picture is because our bodies are inside the picture. The plurality that we perceive is only an appearance; it is not real.”*

Now take 4 minutes to listen to [this video](#) beginning at 42.00 to 46.37. You will learn that the universe may be an illusion and that it may only exist when it is being observed.

Now let's come back to non duality.

If everything is just boundless energy, then there really may be no separation.

The apparent separateness between you and the external world is powerful illusion that seems to divide the Oneness of experience into two separate things, when in reality everything is one.

And, when you “awaken” to this sense of Oneness, there is a dramatic shift in your being. There is happiness, joy, love and transcendence.



There are many non-dualist teachers who suggest that reality is totally subjective and that all matter is only created through awareness, i.e. observation. So rather than the physicalist objective lower right quadrant being the only reality, the non-dualists say that the subjective upper left quadrant is the only reality.

Now, if all of this has not made your head explode, search nonduality on the web and learn more. Some teachers include Rupert Spira, Tony

Parsons and Tim Freke. And if my musings have really gotten you into this [Take the time to hear one of Freke's lectures.](#)

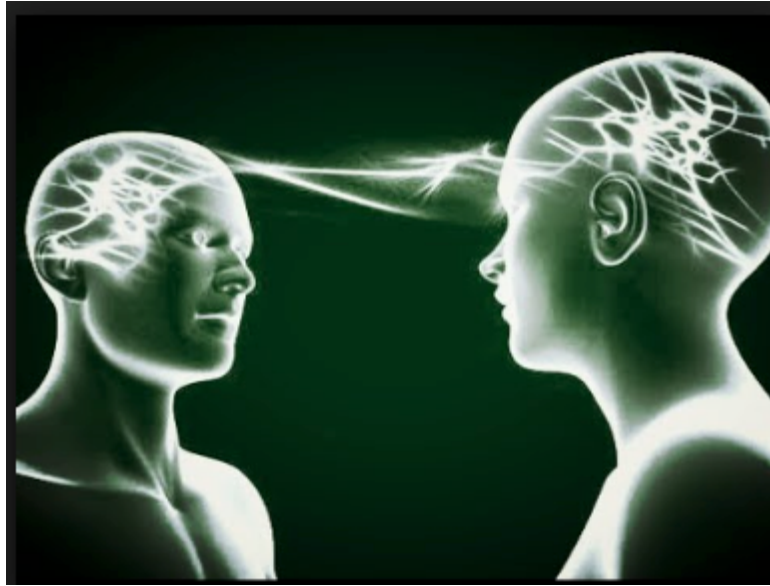
So, does non duality prove the premise ***A rationalistic scientific way of thinking is the only way to the truth of reality*** to be false? Well perhaps rather than either/or it should be both/and. Can we entertain the paradox in the same way as [Schrödinger's cat](#)? Two opposites can both be true.

How are you with paradoxes? Can you entertain two conflicting realities?

When have you experienced a sense of oneness? A sense of non duality?



# PARAPSYCHOLOGY



In an attempt to show that physicalism is not the sole basis of reality, I have researched a little about parapsychology. By the way, physicalism means relying only on science for the truth.

Parapsychology is the study of paranormal and psychic phenomena which include telepathy, precognition, clairvoyance, psychokinesis, near-death experiences, reincarnation, apparitional experiences, and other paranormal claims. It is identified as pseudoscience and yet continues to be investigated despite being unable to provide convincing evidence for the existence of any psychic phenomena after more than a century of research.

The challenge with investigation of these kind of phenomenon is that they are not conducive to the scientific method and are almost entirely anecdotal in nature.

I have listed below examples of parapsychological phenomena with links to Wikipedia articles, all of which debunk them with lots of citations. And there are not many entries that try to rebut their invalidity.

<u>Mediums</u>	<u>Telepathy</u>
Speaking to and hearing the dead	Reading others' minds
<u>Demonic Possession</u>	<u>Precognition</u>
Being possessed by an evil spirit	Knowing a specific future event
<u>Reincarnation</u>	<u>Remote Viewing</u>
Living individuals reveal past lives	See things beyond one sight
<u>Psychokinesis</u>	<u>Astral projection</u>
Moving objects with your mind	Going to another place without your body
<u>Aura Reading</u>	<u>Clairvoyance</u>
See light around a body	Various forms of ESP
<u>Near Death Experiences</u>	<u>Objects that have magical powers such as or magnetic bracelets, electrical devices</u>
Remote viewing and heavenly experiences while almost dead	

Much of above is believed and practiced by well-intentioned people, but some are frauds and tricksters who do these things for money.

All of us have anecdotal stories that support this stuff, including me. I was transported out of my body to the ceiling when I was 10 years old. My son read my mind when he was three. These are stories, not explanations. And, one story does not make the case for paranormal phenomenon .

Most of the research is based on “a belief in search of data rather than observation in search of an explanation”. Kinda like creationism.

Near Death experiences are certainly real, but do not demonstrate that there is an afterlife. See this article on the physiology of drugs and NDE's.

The **One Million Dollar Paranormal Challenge** was an offer by the James Randi Educational Foundation (JREF) to pay out one million U.S. dollars to anyone who can demonstrate a supernatural or paranormal ability under agreed-upon scientific testing criteria. A version of the challenge was first issued in 1964. Over a thousand people applied to take it, but none have been successful.

Susan Blakemore, parapsychology researcher for 30 years, revealed what she found in researching paranormal phenomenon. And guess what she found. Nothing! Listen to her interview on Closer to The Truth. She made the statement that if these phenomena were shown to be true, the entirety of science would be upended. Let's hope that it happens. just for the excitement of it.

There are serious organizations with reputable people who continue to investigate these phenomena. These include:

Institute of Noetic Sciences -Wikipedia

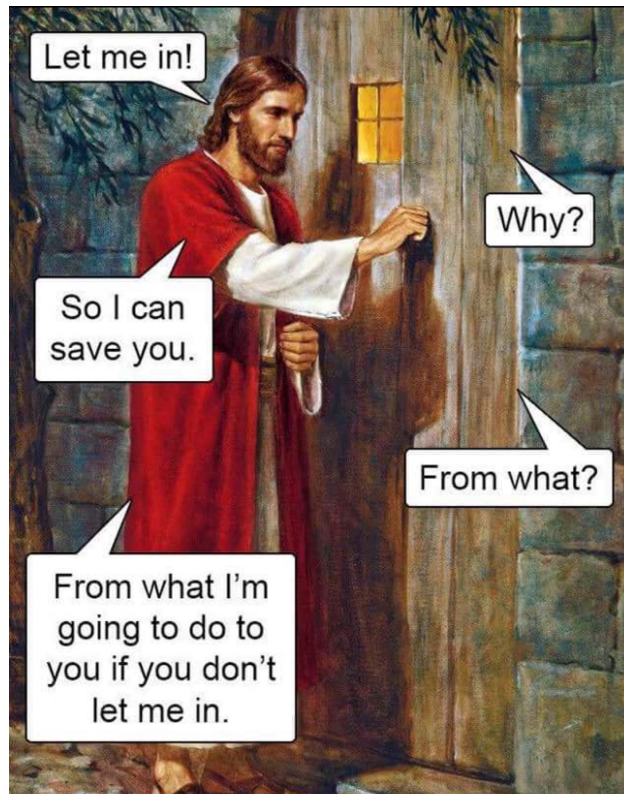
The research reported on their website is sparse.

University of Virginia Institute of Perceptual Studies

Their books are 800 pages and cost \$50. Not exactly written to convince a wide audience.

So, does parapsychology prove the premise *A rationalistic scientific way of thinking is the only way to the truth of reality* to be false? I doubt it. However, I am interested in your views, particularly if you can cite specific research that supports any of these phenomena.

# BELIEFS



## The Apostles Creed.

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,

the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

As a boy, I was an acolyte in the Episcopal church. The apostle's creed was recited out loud at every service. When I was about 15, I realized that I was an acolyte to please my grandmother. By 18, I was a pain-in-the-ass atheist, asking people whether an all-powerful God could strike a match on a wet piece of soap. I came to understand the Holy Communion as the cannibalistic ritual taken from pagan times and that passages in the bible caused the deaths of millions of people.

And now, I do not believe in anything in the Apostles creed; the immaculate conception, the virgin birth, the resurrection, judgment, saints, and the rest. It is a hell of a story, but it is not true. So am I a Christian? I say yes.

Many years ago I read [The Desire of the Everlasting Hills: The World Before and After Jesus](#). I "got" Jesus. The message is simple: Love, Tolerance and Compassion. That is it. Everything else can be ignored including sin, hell, redemption, and all that other dogmatic stuff. And "Christians" who are not loving to all, tolerant of all, and compassionate for all, are not following the teachings of Christ.

I have moved to a secular value system, which I think is the trend. As Europe has become more secular in the last 50 years, has it become less moral? It has not. There can be a moral value system based in culture and humanistic values without religion. In fact, many think that religion has a negative net value. YouTube debates on whether religion does more harm than good are fascinating. The anti-religion side usually wins.

While not religious associated with dogma, I am still a seeker of the transcendent and continue to try to seek truth beyond the logical and physical.

And, I am deeply respectful of others' personal experience and their connection to their personal God or whatever brings them awareness of that which is greater. I remember seeing a Hindu woman turn and leave a shrine of a Goddess and the peaceful expression on her face was the same as those leaving the altar from the Eucharist. You won't find me arguing with you about your internal experience. And of course, don't discount mine either.

So, what are your beliefs? Do they match mine or is there something you want to add?

# DEATH



I died on January 11, 2000. My heart stopped and my lungs quit functioning. There was no heartbeat and no air going into and out of my lungs. There was no time; no past, no present, and no future. I was not aware that I existed. I was gone.

25 minutes later my heart was restarted and my lungs inflated. And, I was taken off of a heart/lung bypass machine. Three hours later I became conscious and a breathing tube was taken out of my throat. I had been unconscious for five hours while undergoing open heart surgery to repair the mitral valve in my heart. I was totally unaware and I only knew that I was alive when I woke up.

This has happened again in 2013 when I had a five-hour operation to rebuild my broken arm from a bike accident. At stage 4 anesthesia there is no awareness. A total blank. This is unlike sleep where one dreams and there are at times some sense of awareness.

Based on my personal experience, my belief is that when I die, it will like going into a deep sleep and not waking up. My body will be gone. I will no longer cast a shadow. I will no longer exist. So, there is really no need to be afraid of being dead. I just won't exist. Just like my parents, Frances and Lee, my brother Gordon, and my son Brian, no longer exist; and my deceased friends and billions of other humans in the past.

Being born is waking up having not gone to sleep. I will be in the same place as I was in March 1941 prior to my conception. No place. And of course, there is the mystery. Who knows if there is life after death? No one knows and if someone professes to know, they are coming from their own personal subjective experience.



Now how about the process of dying. That I fear. I used to joke that some idiot is going to whisper in my ear on my deathbed "This is going to be a growth experience." I now know that it is. Some die quickly almost instantaneously like my son Brian who was killed in an auto accident. But many die slowly. And for those who do, it can be a transcendent experience.

I have been reading [Grace in Dying](#) by Kathleen D Singh. She was with hundreds of individuals who were dying and found that almost all of them move through phases of chaos, acceptance and then surrender leading to peace and transcendence. I hope to do that and to rise above the suffering when I am dying.

I know that as one approaches death, material things fall away and relationships and connection with others emerge to be the most important. I do believe that we are born to love, and that love is perhaps all that ultimately matters to us.

What is your take on dying?

Life after death? Continued consciousness?

# SUMMARY



As an introduction to my summary of the last 12 blogs, here is a video which represents a simple present moment. The love and connection between Judith and me. Our connection to nature, to the flow of life, the wind, water, and the sailing technology a thousand years in the making. We come together through the permutations of our respective lives and the lives of our ancestors and the universe. It is a testament to our having lived lives that are qualitatively and materially better than most humans. With these blessings we are brought together in a simple sublime moment. And, the present moment is superior to and transcends all speculation.

Now with that, I am going to speculate.

I have no idea where or why the universe exists. My life and the universe are a staggering mystery. My place in the universe is so small, it is not a place. My place in time is so short, it is no time. The universe is impersonal. Without life, it is without meaning or consciousness. With the complexity of life, the Universe becomes conscious and meaningful.

Facts and evidence along with rationality are important. Evolution and climate change are proven. Anti-GMO and Anti-Vax is batty. It is useful to examine false premises and to be willing to drop them. The sun rises and sets and yet paradoxically, the earth goes around the sun. The motions of the planets do not influence the affairs of humans.

The Bible is a book that is written by men not by God. Good Bible stories and precepts cause good things. Bad Bible stories and precepts have caused death and destruction of millions. One of many current examples is that pressure from some religious leaders has resulted in the banning of a number of anti-AIDS campaigns, including condom promotion in Africa. This may have caused the deaths of thousands of men and women and children; perhaps more.

The false premise that we began examining is.. ***A rationalistic scientific way of thinking is the only way to the truth of reality.*** This because my bias is empiricism and rationalism. Science can only explain reality.

I explored consciousness. Consciousness is a mystery to scientists. It is difficult to scientifically research subjective experience, although it is being done with some credibility. Non duality is an “experience“ of consciousness where the subjective sense of oneness and connection with everything is a real phenomenon, although a relative few have experienced it. Some non dualists think that the world only exists in our consciousness and is revealed to us by observation. So, the moon did not exist before mankind. This, in my view, is nuts. This is almost like creationists who declare that nothing existed before a few thousand years ago.

In looking at Psi phenomenon, I found little of it credible. I am trying to keep an open mind; however, it is difficult because so many charlatans pollute the landscape. Kinda like televangelists and faith healers.

I then looked at Christian dogma and declared most of it as invalid for me. I do adhere to Christian values, of tolerance, love, and compassion. These values are expressed in

many other religions. What you believe is up to you. Just don't try to convert or control me and I will do the same for you.

I am not a sinner nor have I been a violent person.

And as far as death is concerned, I, like you, will have to face it. Although there are thousands of stories and beliefs of life after death, there is no credible evidence for this. It is a mystery. And what the hell, I have known my entire life that I will die in the midst of the mystery.

I will continue to explore these ideas and others in future blogs. Meantime I have an invitation for you. If you want to talk about this stuff on Zoom webcam, email me. I love to be in conversation.

# SIN AND EVIL



I was introduced to the concept of sin when I went to Sunday school at an Episcopal church; and have been exposed to those who preach to us sinners. A sin is an immoral act considered to be a transgression against divine law. And, I do not see myself as a sinner. I don't believe in divine law and so I don't transgress against divine law. I guess I could say that I am a good person who has done some bad things that are minor. I have not stolen from others, other than an occasional grape from the grocery store or the miscalculated change. I have never physically hurt anyone. In fist fights in junior high school, I was mostly on the receiving end. I have never abused anyone. I don't think that I have ever really been mean. That does not mean that I have not unintentionally hurt someone's feelings and or that I am some saint. It just means that I have lived life as a good guy.

Now that being said, on reading the above, it seems pretty sanctimonious. I have hurt people. I have made them mad and hurt feelings. Most the time by having judgments about what they do, not about who they are. My son is a good example. As a father and someone who cares about him I want him to lead a happy life, and when I judge that he is not doing things in his interest, I have made it known. And, that has really

pissed him off at times. And there have been other people in my life to whom I have voiced judgements who have been hurt and upset.

I asked a Catholic colleague of mine one time when she last sinned. And she said very recently. She stated that she had sinful thoughts. Wow, isn't that something. The Church indoctrinates people to feel guilty about their thoughts as well as their actions. Yep. Better not look at an attractive woman or man with some imagination or you will go to hell. That's one of the ten commandments, right. What an ingenious way to exert power and control over others. You have to come to us to confess to your very thoughts.

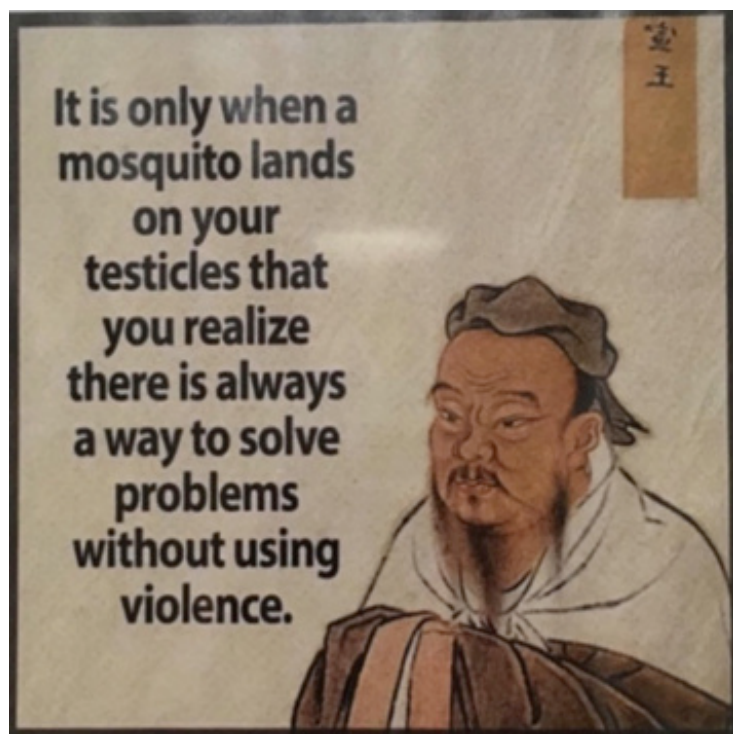
How about evil? In the movie Judgement at Nuremberg, two prosecutors are talking and one states that the root of evil is the lack of empathy. That really struck me. In what way am I evil? Do I lack empathy? Of course I do. And there are acts of omission and acts of commission. Taking action to do harm is evil. Failing to act? Perhaps that is just cowardice.

And I can't absolutely say that I am incapable of evil. Too many normal people have done evil. I recently read a survey that 70% of people have thought about murdering someone at one time in their lives.

So are you a sinner?

Have you ever been evil or personally known anyone who is evil?

# VIOLENCE



An earlier comment about violence caused me to think more about the violence I have actually seen for myself during my lifetime, rather than having read about or seeing videos, or heard from others. Well, to me the world is not a violent place if I based this on what I have personally seen. I have never seen blood spilled ( except for a cut), either through attack or accident. Unlike a police officer or an emergency room nurse or doctor, or combat soldier, I have not only not been exposed to the effects of violence, I have not actually seen any one shot or injured. I have not even seen a grisly automobile accident.

The above is actually pretty remarkable. Reading history, and the news one sees violence all the time. There is lots of violence in movies, TV, books and games.

But when I think about it, 150 years ago, most people were on farms and small towns. Being that there was little news of the wider world, their reality was that things were peaceful, unless they were in a war zone or high crime culture. So the speed of information from afar has created the impression that the world is full of violence

when, as a percentage of the time, it is not. There could be a 6 million people exposed to violent acts a year in the US, either through being a victim or perpetrator and that would mean that 98% of the population was not personally exposed to violence. An interesting statistic is that the incidence of fatal and non fatal gun violence in the United States has dropped by 40% in the last 20 years. Who would know that by reading and listening to the news.

So one of the ways that I have lived a blessed life, is that I have not been exposed to or suffered from violence.

So, to what degree have you been personally exposed to violence?