

Adding reason to faith

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Monday, August 15

Breathing Room

by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on August 15, 2005 12:18AM (EDT)

This is a working blog which acts as the active arena of the ongoing work regarding the development of the metaphysical model of reality known as Symbiotic Panentheism

The archive home of the ongoing 50 year project can be found at www.panentheism.com.

Acquiring a little breathing space

Needed: Some time alone for reflection/contemplation/meditation/thinking

But I will return.

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Sunday, August 14

Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: A Neo-Buddhistic model of Reality: Part I

by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on August 14, 2005 12:27AM (EDT)

[Clyde G. is a respected thinker and Neo-Buddhist who has been acknowledged for his ability to ask questions going to the heart of issues regarding metaphysical models of reality.](#)

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A Neo-Buddhistic model of Reality: Part I

[050804 cg] Hmmmm...OK, that's what you believe.

You wrote, "I do not understand how it is you do not concur" I understand that body and mind, the physical and the mental are fundamentally ONE. I understand that the body/mind is the soul and lives within the ONE and is one with the ONE. Do you understand now?

[050813 djs] Yes, thank you.

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Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: A Neo-Buddhistic model of Reality: Part II

by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on August 14, 2005 12:26AM (EDT)

Clyde G. is a respected thinker and Neo-Buddhist who has been acknowledged for his ability to ask questions going to the heart of issues regarding metaphysical models of reality.

A Neo-Buddhistic model of Reality: Part II

[050805 cg] I care about the living truth. You seek to "prove" G-d exists. I embrace G-d and G-d embraces me, you, and all that is. You seek to "define" G-d. I experience G-d and G-d experiences me, you, and all that is.

You asked, "1. Regarding your statement, 'G-d exists.': What possible reason could you have for making such a statement?" My reason for making the statement is my experience of G-d. I know G-d in the same way I know red or hot. In fact, it is through my faculties (my senses, my consciousness, and my awareness) that I experience G-d.

You asked, "2. Regarding your statement, 'G-d exists.': What do you mean by 'G-d'? Define 'G-d'." I have no attachment

to any definition of G-d. I use the one most expedient. We can use yours. But remember, it is only a definition that we agree to use, a definition for the ineffable.

And I have no attachment to what we call IT, The Whole, G-d, Reality, ONE, Singularity, and on...and on.... But remember, it is only a name for the nameless.

[050813 djs] I understand and appreciate your flexibility.

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Saturday, August 13

Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: Individuated entities of knowing: Part VIII

by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on August 13, 2005 12:01AM (EDT)

Dialogue: A Neo-Buddhist and a Symbiotic Panentheist

Clyde G. is a respected thinker and Neo-Buddhist who has been acknowledged for his ability to ask questions going to the heart of issues regarding metaphysical models of reality.

Individuated entity of knowing: Part VIII

[050721 cg] You posited the existence of evil. I acknowledged evil as a concept and evil as an adjective to modify acts performed by human beings. My question (Does evil exist, in and of itself?) is about your understanding of the nature of reality; i.e., a metaphysical question.

[050727 djs] Regarding: I acknowledged evil as a concept and evil as an adjective to modify acts performed by human beings. I agree.

Regarding: (Does evil exist, in and of itself?) I don't know.

There are times I think so and at other times I just don't know. In general I personally think so. The metaphysical model, symbiotic panentheism, does not purport 'evil' to exist.

Regarding: My question (Does evil exist, in and of itself?) is about your understanding of the nature of reality; i.e., a metaphysical question. Metaphysically speaking in terms of the symbiotic panentheistic model of reality: Symbiotic panentheism would suggest 'evil' is differentiated from 'good' by the environment that is 'created' by a soul for itself by itself. 'Evil' would be the state wherein the soul would experience what it is the soul does not 'enjoy' experiencing, the less 'enjoyment' the greater the 'evil' and 'good' is the state wherein the soul would experience what it is the soul does 'enjoy' experiencing, the more 'enjoyment' the greater the 'good.'

In short, symbiotic panentheism purports: We each create our own 'heaven' and our own 'hell'.

[050729 cg] OK, I'll ask, what is it that a soul enjoys? If you can't answer for all souls, then what things might a soul enjoy? What does your soul enjoy?

And why would a soul, "for itself by itself", create an environment that it did not enjoy?

[050812 djs] Regarding your question: 'OK, I'll ask, what is it that a soul enjoys?' Each soul is unique and as such enjoys uniquely. Only the individual 'knows' what it enjoys. Having said that I can go on to say: It appears 'souls' for the most part enjoy nature, enjoy music, enjoy sunshine, enjoy love, enjoy making love, enjoy companionship, ...

Regarding your question: 'What does your soul enjoy?' And I, well I enjoy nature, I enjoy love, I enjoy music, I enjoy making love, I enjoy some companionship, ...

And what is it I enjoy that others may not? I enjoy solitude, I enjoy, thinking, I enjoy philosophy, I enjoy metaphysics, I enjoy meditation, I enjoy utilizing the tool of macro-

observation, ...

Regarding your question: **‘And why would a soul, "for itself by itself", create an environment that it did not enjoy?’** Why would a child touch a hot stove when it is not an experience they will enjoy? The child may do so because they do not understand and thus act out of ignorance. Likewise a ‘soul’ may ‘create’ an environment that it did not enjoy because they do not understand they are doing so.

Bottom line: The act emerges out of ignorance.

The remedy: Education.

And who is to be the educator? The one who understands has the responsibility to do the educating, has the responsibility to be the teacher.

Buddha understood. Buddha became a teacher, by choice.

Gandhi understood. Gandhi became a teacher, by choice

Machiavelli did not understand. Machiavelli became a teacher, by choice.

Hitler did not understand. Hitler became a teacher, by choice.

The impact upon society and the individual generated by Buddha and Gandhi were entirely different than the impact upon society and the individual generated by Machiavelli and Hitler.

Now if you understand and I understand then isn't it apparent where our responsibility lies?

[deleted materials]

[050727 djs] Regarding: **What does it mean to you to "become ONE" with G-d?** Symbiotic panentheism outlines an understanding of reality where, in terms of the individual, two states of existence eventually take place 'after' the individual journeys through the physical.

a. **First:** The individual merges with G-d, becomes one with G-d, expands upon G-d's very knowing, expands upon G-d's very ability to empathize, expands upon G-d's power (knowledge is power), ... (without 'changing' G-d since G-d is the 'is', since G-d is the 'present', ... Site Google 'The whole does not change' at www.panentheism.com).

I suppose one could think of this as a process of duplication and absorption of the individual.

Mathematically one might use the analogy that the set of whole numbers includes the elements comprising the set of natural numbers.

In a sense one might say that this aspect indicates the individual arises and passes away just as you say.

b. **Second:** The individual retains its unique knowing, individuality, existence within the 'realm' of total consciousness.

In short the individual remains as the individual and as such the individual arises but does not pass away. Nothing is lost.

The metaphysical model of reality, symbiotic panentheism, is an unusual model for it is not an 'either'/'or' scenario but rather symbiotic panentheism is an 'and' scenario, for example: not Cartesianism or non-Cartesianism but is both Cartesianism or non-Cartesianism, not monism or dualism but is both dualism and monism, not phenomenology or existentialism but is both phenomenology or existentialism, not heaven or hell but is both heaven and hell, is not existence or nothingness but is both existence and nothingness, is not real or illusion but is both real and illusion, ...

[050729 cg] **I believe that you are, here and now, fully merged**

with G-d. I believe that you are, here and now, a unique entity. Then you die. No thing really changes.

[050812 djs] Regarding your statement: 'I believe that you are, here and now, fully merged with G-d.' I agree, since time is a universal aspect of the physical and simultaneously not a universal aspect of G-d

Regarding your statement: 'I believe that you are, here and now, a unique entity.' I agree and since 'nothing is lost' you never simply 'cease to be'

Regarding your statement: 'Then you die.' I agree if you are referring to your physical mechanism, if you are referring to your non-physical self/your intangible essence/your self knowing/your 'spiritual' self/your unique perception of knowing and experiencing of the physical then I do not agree since 'nothing is lost' and thus you never simply 'cease to be'

Regarding your statement: 'No thing really changes.' From within an existence where time is an innate characteristic of the universal fabric of existence/from within the physical I disagree. From within an existence where time is NOT an innate characteristic of the universal fabric of existence/from within the abstract/intangible, I disagree.

The ability to distinguish as well as understand the difference between the two locations, 'the physical' and the non-physical', requires one to use the tool of 'stepping beyond' the reality one wishes to understand and observe. The tool is best described as 'macro-observation'.

When one stands 'within' the reality one wishes to understand and observe the whole of that reality, one has the same problem as one does when standing 'within' the forest to observe the forest, namely: 'One cannot see the forest for the trees.' This process is known as 'micro-observation' and is inadequate for most ecological observations / metaphysical observations.

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Friday, August 12

Dialogue with/a Neo-Buddhist/Re: Rational Thinking: Part VII

by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on August 12, 2005 01:49PM (EDT)

Dialogue: A Neo-Buddhist and a Symbiotic Panentheist

Clyde G. is a respected thinker and Neo-Buddhist who has been acknowledged for his ability to ask questions going to the heart of issues regarding metaphysical models of reality.

The art of rational thinking: Part VII

[deleted materials]

[050727 djs] Regarding: '**... to debate the issue is a futile exercise where one holds a belief that is determined by authority or consensus.**' Both mathematics and science base their progress upon the concept of acknowledging authority and consensus. The process has served them well. I do not understand why it is that the process science has found to be so useful is rejected as a basic tool for rational thinking.

[050729 cg] **Nonsense! The sum of the angles of a triangle does not depend on authority or consensus. Mathematics is a discipline of logical thinking to discover the truth. The speed of light does not depend on authority or consensus. Science is a method of observation and experimentation to discover truth.**

To submit "rational thinking" to authority and consensus is... not rational!

[050812 djs] Regarding your statement: The sum of the angles of a triangle does not depend on authority or consensus.

<http://www.cut-the-knot.org/triangle/pythpar/NonEuclid.shtml>

Non-Euclidean Geometries Introduction

Let's solve the following problem:

A fellow took a morning stroll. He first walked 10 mi South, then 10 mi West, and then 10 mi North. It so happened that he found himself back at his house door. How can this be?

Most people react with disbelief on hearing that the problem has solutions. The four directions (West, North, East, and South) are successively perpendicular to each other. So how can this be? Here's one solution. (The problem has a whole continuum of solutions so that not much will be lost if I give away one of them.)

Consider the North Pole. Going 10 mi South from the Pole brings one on a parallel each point of which is located 10 mi South from the North Pole. Walking straight West one stays on the same parallel and, therefore, at the same distance from the Pole. To get there, just stroll 10 mi North.

Poles require a special consideration but everywhere else the four directions do form a cross with four right angles. Our solution to the problem shows that there is a triangle with two right angles at the base (which is already strange) and a nonzero angle at the top. **There is no escaping it: there is a triangle whose angles sum**

up to

more than 180° . This is not exactly what we are taught in high school. Every one who took a Geometry class knows that three angles of a triangle sum up to 180° .

The high school geometry is Euclidean. Laid down by Euclid in his *Elements* at about 300 B. C., it underwent very little change until the middle of the 19th century when it was discovered that other, non-Euclidean geometries, exist. I wonder about the source of the above problem. Was it invented in the last century? Before? After?

Discovery of non-Euclidean geometries had a profound impact on the development of mathematics in the 19th and 20th centuries. For more than two thousand years *Elements* served as a mathematical bible, the foundation of the axiomatic method and a source of the deductive knowledge. Euclid's postulates, however, have been based on our (or his) intuition of geometric objects. With the discovery of non-Euclidean geometries, the *Elements* were scrutinized and logical omissions were found. As an upshot, axiomatic method has been divorced from intuition and formalized, which eventually led to the development of Metamathematics and Model Theory and ultimately to Godel's Theorems and Abraham Robinson's Non-Standard Analysis. Einstein's Theory of General Relativity is based on the idea that material bodies distort the space and redefine its geometry.

Regarding your statement: [The speed of light does not depend on authority or consensus.](#)

<http://csep10.phys.utk.edu/guidry/violence/>

lightspeed.html

A Cosmic Speed Limit

The velocity of light plays a central role in astronomy and in physics. According to the *Einstein's Theory of Relativity*, nothing in our universe can exceed the velocity of light; thus, it is a kind of cosmic speed limit against which all other velocities may be measured. More generally, light is part of what is called the *electromagnetic spectrum*, which includes infrared radiation, radio waves, gamma rays, X-rays, ultraviolet radiation, and so on. All of these are a form of light; they just have energies that differ from the visible light that our eyes can see. Thus, these forms of electromagnetic radiation all travel at the speed of light too.

The Speed of Light is Constant

Furthermore, contrary to normal intuition, the Theory of Relativity tells us that light *always* travels at the same speed relative to some observer, no matter what the relative motion of the observer. Thus, light emitted from a moving airplane does not travel with the speed of light plus the speed of the airplane, it travels with the "speed of light", no matter what the speed of the airplane! In a vacuum, **light always travels at a speed of 299,792,458 meters per second, no matter how its speed is measured.**

Although this seems strange, it has been confirmed in many experiments. These experiments show that it is our "common sense" that is wrong in this case!

To be precise, what we usually call the "speed of light" is really the speed of light in a vacuum (the absence of matter). In reality, **the speed of light depends on the material that light moves through.** Thus, for example, light moves slower in glass than in air, and in both cases the speed is less than in a

vacuum. However, the density of matter between the stars is sufficiently low that the actual speed of light through most of interstellar space is essentially the speed it would have through a vacuum, so we don't make much error by ignoring the difference.

The preceding statements about the constant speed of light refer to the speed of light in a particular medium, such as a vacuum. Within such a medium, the speed is constant, but light changes its speed when it moves from one medium (say air) to another (say glass). This change of speed at the boundary between two different media is the principle that causes a lens in a telescope or eyeglasses to work.

If mathematicians and scientists did not reach a consensus, a unanimous consensus, as to specifically what it is they are discussing, as to the specific parameters they are discussing, as to the specific principles of their debates, then nothing meaningful emerges from their discourse but gibberish. Personal, internal universal, meaning only emerges from consensus based upon faith/religion. And intra-universal meaning only emerges from consensus based upon rational/philosophical and measurable/scientific consensus. And further, inter-universal meaning only emerges from consensus based upon rational consensus supported by all three of our three perceptual tools, namely: observation/scientific measurements, faith/religious wisdom, and reason/philosophical dialectics.

Regarding your statement: [To submit "rational thinking" to authority and consensus is... not rational!](#) Once again I will state: Both mathematics and science base their progress upon the concept of acknowledging authority and consensus. The process has served them well. I do not understand why it is that the process science has found to be so useful is rejected as a basic tool for rational thinking.

So what are religion and philosophy afraid of when it comes to ['... submit\(ing\) "rational thinking" to authority and](#)

'consensus'? Is such a process really '... not rational?'

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Wednesday, August 10

Dialogue with a Neo-Buddhist: Why build a model of reality: Part II

by [Daniel J. Shepard](#) on August 10, 2005 01:00AM (EDT)

Dialogue: A Neo-Buddhist and a Symbiotic Panentheist

Clyde G. is a respected thinker and Neo-Buddhist who has been acknowledged for his ability to ask questions going to the heart of issues regarding metaphysical models of reality.

Why build a model of reality: Part II

[deleted materials]

[050717 cg] I understand your argument leads you to think that "the self awareness of one's experiencing the telephone ring would remain." I understand you to mean that our perceptions (or memories of perceptions?) exist forever within our selves; i.e., our eternal souls are, like sacks, filled with our experience.

While I think your argument is flawed, there is a way that I can understand how (without the attribute "eternal") 'our souls are filled with our experience' is an expression of truth. I experience each separate moment and I may name the flow of my experiences my "soul". (Alternatively, I may name that which experiences the present my "soul".)

[050727 djs] Regarding: 'I understand you to mean that our perceptions (or memories of perceptions?) exist forever within our selves; i.e., our eternal souls are, like sacks, filled with our experience.' You are partially correct. Perhaps it would help for me to use your analogy of the soul being a form of 'sack'. The 'sack'/soul contains the experience, simultaneously the sack is more than just a 'container'. The soul/'sack' is the ability to know, is the ability to summarize the experiences into a unique form of perception defined by 1. the unique summation of experiencing through traveling the physical, which begins at zero and ends with the last experience of the physical journey, and 2. the unique 'personality' of that particular unique 'soul' to process and then form a unique spirit through the process of the mixing of experiencing with the unique ability to perceive.

In short the soul acts as the 'sack' capable of uniquely processing experiencing. In short the 'sack' is filled with unique experiencing from which a unique spirit emerges through a processing conducted by the soul. I suppose one could say it is like baking a cake, water is added to the mix forming a unique solution which in turn is baked forming something entirely different from the original mix.

The idea that this 'spirit', formed through a unique soul processing a set of unique experiencing, eventually could simply cease to be, is what I perceive to be a loss of great magnitude.

[050728 cg] With the notable exception that you believe the soul is eternal, how does my presentation (I experience each separate moment and I may name the flow of my experiences my "soul". Alternatively, I may name that which experiences the present my "soul".) differ with yours?

[050806 djs] Regarding: With the notable exception that you believe the soul is eternal, how does my presentation differ with yours? I would suggest that, along with its inherent ramifications regarding the meaning of life, is the only difference existing between the two of us.

[deleted materials]

[050711 djs continues] To state unequivocally, supported by scientific validation - religious history - and philosophical dialectic, that 'multiplicity/individuality exists universally and interacts with the whole' is to state a 'universal absolute truth'.

[050712 cg] So you say.

[050716 djs] It is not 'I' that says it, it is humanity, to the best of its ability, that says it.

[050717 cg] If you are speaking for humanity, then I am outside of humanity.

[050727 djs] Regarding: **If you are speaking for humanity, then I am outside of humanity.** We are all 'outside' humanity yet we are all 'inside' humanity. We are all individually unique as opposed to being a 'colony' organism. In a society of unique individuals, humanity is simply a 'color' of the summation of human action, a historical vector of past action leading to and through present action pointing towards future action.

We cannot control past action nor can we control present action (the present does not exist in the physical universe). We can only control what our future action will be and thus we have the ability to shift the historical vector of human action. This is where our responsibility lies. This is what 'free will' is all about.

It is my 'belief' that the human historical vector of action cannot be consciously shifted if we do not recognize it, understand where it is pointing, and consciously understand how we can alter the vector's direction. In addition, it is my 'belief' that once we consciously understand how to alter the vector's direction, the direction will not automatically change, the change will only occur should we take the action needed to

make it do so.

It is also my 'belief' that this historical vector can only be consciously shifted if we expand our understanding of reality for it is my opinion that humanity, as opposed to the individual, defines itself in terms of its understanding of Reality.

[050728 cg] It's your belief.

[050806 djs] So it is, and as such it affects my altruistic acts.

[deleted materials]

[050716 djs] I do not mean to 'avoid' the issues but I am not suggesting that I am an expert in understanding the details which exist regarding the spirit, the soul, the physical body, the physical universe, and total consciousness. There are others who could better answer your specific questions. You might begin by looking to the Theosophy Society, the Rosicrucians, etc.

For me to get into all the minutia is to suggest I am an expert in the subject.

I am simply stating that 'truth' exists and the basic truths are: G-d exists, the individual exists, the physical exists, and nothingness exists. I am stating that 'nothing, that exists, is lost, ceases to be. I am stating that all that exists not only exists but has functionality for if what exists has no functionality/meaning it does not exist. I am stating that all that exists, exists in a symbiotic relationship with all else that exists. I am stating that we are capable of understanding what it is we are capable of purporting or questioning, namely: Where are we? What are we? Why do we exist? From where did I come? To where will I go? Why am I responsible for my actions? Do I have free will? Is G-d powerful enough and knowledgeable enough to 'grow' in Its very power and knowledge? What role do I play in G-d's growth should G-d in fact grow? Etc.

It is these base questions for which I feel I have as much expertise as anyone, as opposed to having an expertise dealing with the questions the details details, intricacies, and minutia which surrounds every aspect of the spirit, soul, mind, and body. I am a metaphysicist not a biologist, physicist, or chemist. I am a metaphysicist not a priest, rabbi, or cleric. I am a metaphysician not an epistemologist, modal logician, or epiphenomenalist.

My apologies, I wish I could be more for you.

[050717 cg] There is no need to apologize. But I do wonder how you create a metaphysical model of reality that includes an eternal soul yet you find describing the functioning of the soul as "details, intricacies, and minutia". We may or may not have direct experience of G-d, the physical, or "the nothingness of non-existence", but our souls are immediately accessible to us because our souls are us, so we are each 'the expert' regarding our soul.

[050727 djs] There are two observational, literally 'observational', extremes one can take when discussing metaphysical issues.

There is the 'micro' metaphysical discussion emanating from the point of the individual, in such a case, issues regarding the individual, are not spoken of in terms of 'details', 'intricacies', and 'minutia', for the issues are personal in nature since we are each unique individuals and thus unique in our individuality. Issues, once taken personally, are no longer viewed by the individuals as being 'simply' this or 'simply' that for the issues become 'our issues', become, as I said, personal.

Then there is the 'macro' metaphysical discussion emanating from the point of The Whole, in such a case, issues regarding the individual, are spoken of in terms of 'details', 'intricacies', and 'minutia', for the individual, although significant, is 'a minutia', is an 'intricacy', is part of 'the detail'.

[050728 cg] You posit an eternal soul, but when asked about

the soul and its nature and function, you demur because you are not an expert. When I note that since you are a soul you are as expert as anyone, you demur saying it's too personal to discuss. I am asking what you, as a soul, experience. If this is too personal, then the issue is closed.

[050806 djs] OK, I will attempt to describe what it is I as a soul experience. I experience the physical as a physical being, but as a soul, well that is quite a different matter.

My soul, metaphysically speaking in terms of the model of symbiotic panentheism, could be likened to a 'sack filled with experiencing' as you say. The 'sack' is not a leather, paper, cloth, or plastic 'sack'. The 'sack' is a 'knowing' sack. The 'sack' is knowing of what it is that is found 'within' it.

As such, my soul, my knowing of my experiencing, knows, in all sense of the word 'knows', of my personal experience journeying through the physical.

I know of my love of my wife, my love of my children, the trials and tribulations I have personally faced, the desires of my physical body, the desires of my 'soul', my ...

When my physical being feels a stone beneath my foot, my soul 'knows' of the experience, understands the experience, records the experience, associates the experience with other such occurrences, ...

But what of the desires for which my physical/tangible body yearns which my 'soul'/conscious/intangible senses is 'wrong'? If I have no 'soul', the physical dominates. If my 'soul' is dominated by my physical being, the physical dominates. If my physical overpowers my 'soul', the physical dominates.

But what gives some individuals apparently 'greater' control of their free will than others? What causes some individuals to be more empathetic to the plight of others, to be more humane than others? This issue goes to the heart of the soul itself, goes to the heart of the individual itself. In essence the soul has its

own 'desires' and attempts to direct the physical being towards accomplishing the souls desires, aspirations, ...

There are multitudes of influencing factors involved with the interaction of body and soul but regardless of the factor involved, the bottom line is that the individual has free will and is responsible for their actions.

Having clearly stated where it is responsibility lies for one's actions, let me state that one of the more significant generic influencing factors affecting the individual's choice of abstractual hedonism/altruism versus physical hedonism/materialism lies in the individual's understanding of reality.

If the individual understands reality to be what it is they literally 'see' existing 'outside' their 'conscious'/knowing/'soul' then they will embrace physical hedonism/materialism as their ultimate goal.

If, on the other hand, the individual understands reality is not the physical but rather reality is what the physical lies within, reality is 'consciousness' then the individual comprehends that the ultimate existence 'outside' their 'conscious'/knowing/'soul' is more of the same, namely, 'consciousness'/knowing, 'divine substance' then they will embrace abstractual hedonism/altruism as their ultimate goal.

For you, understanding the 'soul' is not important to society, for you already embrace the concept of the non-physical as the 'higher' order of things and you act accordingly. When it comes to others, however, the ramifications of the physically hedonistic take on aspects of Machiavellian stature, i.e. Hitler, Stalin, Mao, ... As such, the education of the individual's knowing/conscious/'soul' is of great significance to society for society is comprised of individuals who are directly impacted by the 'souls' which journey through the physical in conjunction with them.

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