

The FREERANGE SPIRIT (pt. 2)

Introduction

Was it Socrates, whose motto was 'know thyself' - ? Another, could it have been Oscar Wilde - ? , wrote : 'a life unexamined is hardly worth living' . Buddha opined that 'life is suffering', with the rider that such suffering brings 'holistic learning' and therefore the individual gains and grows. Modern psychologists have used the concept of 'self-actualisation' to show how much and how far the individual has the capacity for growth, via the 'exploration route' that is life itself.

One way of describing the 'freerange' mode might be to say it's a 'spirited' approach involving exploration of the human psyche and of its potential and possibilities, employing what might be described as a 'natural faith', and the individual taking a reasonably open-minded stance to life. (subject to decency, safety, respect etc safeguards) This might well tie-in with the older idea which some in modern times support, that a person's life is essentially a journey – a journey of discovery and development, and that one of the potential limitations of any less open-minded, vested interest type of approach could be that it can offer less scope for the same.

Some development psychologists have tried to offer guides to how the individual can develop by exploring the range and scope of human needs. Abraham Maslow, for instance, allegedly the first psychologist to explore the parameters of 'human mental health' (as opposed to 'human mental sickness'), developed via his research the well-known 'hierarchy of human needs' framework, in which he proposed that there are varying and diverse sets of needs set on a scale, ranging from subsistence/ survival type needs, through socially-orientated needs, to 'higher' development needs involving a person 'self-realising' – becoming the fullest version of the self possible. Some have pointed to 'connection to nature' as a prime route to connection with a higher energy force, that of 'Tao' – universal ways/energies which govern the 'way things work', and ignored to potential peril - ? Science has now taken an interest in an overall 'balancing' mechanism believed to operate to 'regulate' the earth's existence. Such factors could indicate why individuals can be innately drawn to 'nature' and the notion of 'balance' - ?

Some suggest that at the 'self-realisation' level, the door may then be able to be opened to even higher consciousness levels, involving then higher levels of fulfillment at a (personal) spiritual level. Might it yet be a mistake to write off such possibilities as 'flights of human fancy' because there appears to be no way to factually verify the existence of higher states, given such a 'write-off' might be a possibility living in times seemingly geared considerably more to 'hands-on' material rather than spiritual gain - ? Maybe, for instance, a level of a sort of 'existential' faith has to come into the 'exploration' route – one of the facets Maslow delved into, for instance, in his further book, The Farther Reaches of Human Nature.

Another (freerange - ?) way, perhaps of looking at such indefinable matters, would be to say that whilst such events (eg. individual experiences of spirituality) might be not easy to pin down from a 'mass' collective, rational/analytic point of view, and therefore differing evaluations could likely exist, it could be possible to accept the existence of spirituality as a 'personal experience' event. Maybe one of the difficulties with this is that some may find this a tricky thing to do i.e. without having the benefit of their own experience. Such considerations could then lead on to slightly

wider and maybe a little more concrete ground, accepting that the nature of individual experience could/can be diverse and therefore different for differing individuals.

Plainly people often make their own decisions concerning, for instance, what to do and how to act, but equally plainly they are not presumably just acting from themselves as a 'microcosm unit', as they are likely to have had many 'outside' influences and conditionings, (egs. parents, media, organisations, peer groups) which can then become 'built-in' to 'who they are'. One of the potential limitations of a culture, say, limiting focus to the 'self', could presumably be the potential there is then to live in the smaller world such a level of self-orientation could engender, and to forego to some extent, living in a bigger, 'expanded-beyond-the-self' world, which then might potentially also negatively impact on the amount of satisfaction the individual is able to harvest from life (for example, if as Maslow suggests, social needs are an important part of the human needs package, the strong 'self' orientated approach, whilst effective at meeting 'survival' needs, may prove to be of limited scope in the satisfaction of such 'higher' needs).

'Aspiring to something bigger-----can create for people a feeling of meaning and purpose, important to thriving'
(spiritual healer)

A useful relevant question maybe, for instance,-----can a person, be, in a real sense, be 'social' from their 'small self-?'

Another potential 'small self' limitation could relate to the ability to reach any 'higher' need satisfaction, and the 'small self' approach could even perhaps be an inhibiting factor in terms of considering any 'higher level need' existence. - ? Presumably, then, any search for 'higher need level' existence and then satisfaction could come down to the individual, assuming they have the will, the means and the degree of personal freedom that might be needed for such 'self-development' work.

This Freerange Spirit pt 2 work aims, in 'enthusiastic amateur' mode, to try to contribute to such exploration, and to those aiming to pursue a freerange-type philosophy relating to the individual's right to explore and decide for themselves.

'Animal, vegetable----or human - ?'

The fact that within nature fierce competition involving life and death struggles exist, is sometimes used to rationalise heavily competitive, 'free market' type of cultures – the old 'survival of the fittest' argument. The intrinsic assumption, though, could be that the human 'animal' is as the animal in the wild, that there is no difference. It's not that hard, though, to develop arguments to suggest that humans have evolved beyond purely animalistic instinctual behaviours, and that to make direct comparisons therefore could be simplistic and erroneous. Compassion, for instance, is often used as a 'higher level' human characteristic, separating humans from other species, as are social patterns such as care for the elderly, although some species of animals, elephants for instance, could presumably said to be fairly well socially evolved - ?:

As reported in a book dedicated to animal heroics, a farmer was cutting back the vegetation on the side of his deep irrigation pool in the Australian outback, his wife having driven the forty or so miles to shop in town and with one of his dogs, a terrier bitch, in attendance, the other, a Rottweiler bitch, sleeping on the doorstep a couple of hundred yards away. Suddenly the farmer slipped and fell into the water. Not being able to swim and with the steep sides to the pool, he was soon in trouble, thrashing about in a panic in the water. The little terrier bitch was instantly agitated,

barking madly, and then changing it to a more high-pitched sound, as the farmer remembered. He was losing the struggle and going under when suddenly he felt a weight come up from below him to support him – it was the Rottweiler bitch, who swam him to a point where the only sapling grew, which he was then able to grab and eventually haul himself out of the pool. Extra rations, probably, for those guys that night---

Real mates ---- and who can really say? Maybe animals operate on a different wavelength, and 'know' a bit more than people think----?

In 'free-market' secular type cultures religion could perhaps be said to have taken more of a 'back seat', maybe then causing outlooks to be free-er from historical ties, and maybe particularly from religion-originated constrictions. One of these, though, could still exist, being felt by some, who might argue that man as the most developed and most dominant life-form on the planet has then responsibility and a 'duty of care' to the planet and those animal forms supported by it, a position of responsibility which isn't necessarily dependent on religious teachings for its existence. If 'God' is 'relegated', for instance, then man has to take responsibility ---- and if not, who then - ?

Such a position of 'responsibility acceptance', for instance, would likely be a self-accepted feature of the developed. 'self-actualised' person (see Freeranger Spirit pt.1), and within a more traditional eastern perspective such as Buddhism and/or Zen 'philosophy', in which all of nature is said to be sacred, people then accepting such 'duty of care' towards nature and its animal populations. Within many religious traditions there is the underlying story of man 'going his own way' and separating from 'Tao' (the universal forces of nature), and the need to find her/his way back 'home' to 'Tao', a then willing acceptance of which is then taken to be 'true individual freedom'. There's been more support, too, from science in recent times, for 'Tao' and its existence, with some scientists suggesting that there is a 'universal' force which works towards 'balance' in Earth's 'operating system'. If some land is wasted, for instance, say by fire, then there's a 'natural' response for nature to re-colonise that land with new-life via plants – it's not just left barren.

It could then be argued that currently a 'separation' phase is taking place with 'man' going his own way and eschewing ideas of 'higher forces' (which can't be identified) in a rational, scientific 'head' orientated age (although more un-collectively there are undoubtedly some – many - individuals who themselves feel the existence of 'Tao' and willingly accept the 'responsible care-taker' role for man). Will, in fact, those ancient teachings prove to be of some prescience, with 'man' having over time to take more account of 'Tao', and having to gear more to the care-taking route, rather than acting in any 'do-what-we-want' dominant fashion - ?? The jury may be yet out, with perhaps mankind somewhat split on this issue, although 'mass man' seems at present perhaps more geared to the dominance route - ? (the recent (Sept. '13) high-powered 'climate-change' summit has for instance re-iterated that activities of man are having a cumulative adverse effect on the planet).

'Wising up----?'

Modern Western-type cultures have been charged with introducing 'dumbing down' trends within them, encouraging people to take a mainly commercial approach to life and so by default relegating non-specific potential areas such as 'spirituality' to 'lower-grade', 'lower focus' considerations, hand-in-hand presumably with the seeming decline of religious influence in the West. A 'freerange' approach, though, might need to range over the whole spectrum of possible 'life need' areas, specific or non-specific, and therefore aim not to fall into any 'limiting'-type pitfall, and this work hopefully makes a contribution to support such a wide-ranging, 'open' approach.

Freerangin' on-----'Zen, freerange, and the art of-----'

Here today by the 'rough office' in the paddock by the orchard, the birds are singing. The sun's out, the air's warm and looking at the abundant grass, the green leafed canopy and the opulence of the blossoms, with an air filled with fragrant scent, it's hard not to feel a little awe, an air of some opulence and a sense of well-being. Nature in her finery - 'splendour, splendour, everywhere', as John Betjamen had it.

The renowned 1970's work of Robert Pirsig, (Zen and the Art of Motor Cycle Maintenance) back along when perhaps life philosophy seemed to be more of a live topic in general life, looked at the way modern life in the USA had gone/was going and concluded that there may well be a 'missing ingredient', which he called 'quality', and that the natural home of quality was in individuals rather than, for instance, organisations. Quality, he suggested, had been diminished by the growth of organisational power at the expense of individual respect and recognition.

Other notable 'life commentators' - Erich Fromm, E.F. Schumacher and Charles Handy spring to mind - have raised concerns that modern western cultures, being geared to money and power objectives, have then created systems conforming people to them, rather than supporting the fuller growth and development of individuals. Handy, for instance, talks about the rise of the 'out-for-self' culture of personal gain/greed in the Reagan and Thatcher years which the new senior bankers these days (late 2012/13) in the UK, are tending to now endorse.

In terms, though, of attempting fuller insight, it's perhaps Pirsig's work that'd be useful to examine further for freeranging 'overview' purposes. He might well have supported the Schumacherian (E.F. Schumacher's Small is Beautiful) notion of the need to 'have a stop and think' - a Pirsig 'quality' move - rather than any 'hurtling on' in a welter of 'innovative change' -the 'quantity' scenario - ?

'Try a little tenderness-----?'

Pirsig points to the 'Head' activity of philosophy and philosophical development as being a root factor in the development of mankind's approach and priorities. This approach Pirsig maintains, has been based on what he calls the 'Church of Reason', which via its logic-based roots, led us into an age of science and materialism, which has meant that the dominant spheres have been 'Head' and 'Will'.

This in turn, Pirsig and others argue, has produced an operating climate which has been analytical, clinical, competitive and aggressive i.e. the 'Heart' (feeling) sphere (of the 'Heart, Head, Will' sequence) has been by default suppressed and hence been unable to have a tempering effect (i.e. achieving the 'natural balance' - ?).

Maybe, as a current TV ad has it; 'Without heart we are mere machines'

Or as Osho, an Eastern-originated mystic put it:

'The world has to be scientific, for all the technologies, comforts ----(also)---the world has to be poetic, otherwise man just becomes a robot'

Hence, implies Pirsig, the rise of 'concrete jungle' urban environments, inhumane animal production systems, lack of environmental care, boring, meaningless and demeaning work, exploitation of labour forces and focus on short-term quantitative material gain as opposed to longer-term sustainable, balanced lifestyles. Other more recent commentators have amplified this theme. Gary Zukav, for instance, in his thought-provoking book The Seat of the Soul comments:-

"In a world that understands power as external, the intellect often functions without the compassionate influence of the heart. This creates situations in which intellectual power is used as a weapon to harm others, to exert will-power without tenderness. The intellect is meant to expand perceptions, to help you grow in perceptual strength and complexity, and not to do harm."

'Quality'

The 'missing ingredient' Pirsig identifies as 'Quality' - indefinable by conventional, rational methods but nevertheless, he maintains, real and relevant, and ignored to longer-term cost. In his work, he maintains that early philosophical thinkers did in fact retain the concept and reality of non-rational 'quality' and it was a major change of philosophical thought direction, which then brought on the analytical, scientific age.

Pirsig does not argue that analysis and scientific investigation are in themselves inappropriate - he himself is very much for technology and its benefits in its rightful place, as perhaps many - most? - would be, but rather that in the powerful flow of scientific investigation and discovery, a key element of the natural balance needed has been lost - i.e. 'quality' (heart dimension, care, individual sensibility and feeling, intuition etc.).

Or rather maybe, a 'mass' society view of the importance of the tempering role of 'quality' in creating overall longer-term harmonious balance has been lost, 'quality' still existing via individuals (some, for instance, have argued that the vast public display of grief and affection for Princess Diana on her death points to a creative collective people statement by default critical of lack of 'quality' in public and business life).

Schumacher, though, goes somewhat further. He argues that virtually all real production has been turned into an 'inhuman chore which does not enrich man but empties him'. Technology, he says, is fine if it's made to serve the human rather than making the human the servant (i.e. of the machine). (a recent UK TV programme highlighted for instance, the plight of eastern industrial workers struggling to get enough to eat, let alone live a fulfilling life). Pirsig might, for instance, describe Schumacher's description as a 'non-quality' situation.

Has the general trend described here, also meant that considerable decision-making power has been taken away from the individuals and into central, larger-scale forums, with the danger that these can be remote from people needs awareness and also, because of 'organisational bigness', developing into a superior 'knowing best' culture -?

Quality in action-----

Two Pirsig-type examples of quality/non-quality situations might look as follows:-

BENEFITS SYSTEM

With Quality

Helpful, supportive approach

Flexible enough to meet real people needs (eg reasonable discretion to assessors)

Provision of real creative training schemes etc to needs of individual

Psychological message from society: real help to the

Without Quality

Critical unhelpful approach

Rigid rules

Minimal based

Psychological message from society: 'not to really wanting

individual's needs (in society's longer-term interest – help develop a creative and productive individual)

to help' (in society's shorter-term interests – less burden on tax payers).

WORK SITUATION

With Quality

Small team approach

Individual and individual's needs known

Individual valued and recognised

Individual scope to contribute

Individual trusted – works as individual, responds to right (quality) treatment

Without Quality

Larger-scale – anonymity

'Automaton' syndrome

Little human, individual recognition

No scope to contribute – work organisation out of individual's control

Individual not trusted (negative non-quality work situation could/would give negative response to trust)

Reacting to such an analysis

Pirsig is not alone in coming to the conclusion that the scientific/technological age may have had something missing - previous social observers have also caught on to the theme. Erich Fromm warned in the fifties of the longer-term potential ill-effects of charging headlong along a materialistic/technological path. J.A.C Brown, in his book Social Psychology of Industry warned of the potential problem effects of making work into a 'boring, meaningless and senseless' experience.

More recently George Ritzer in his graphically titled work The MacDonaldisation of Society paints a negative picture that industrialisation and consumerism is leading to a society with superficial values - primarily monetary - where consumerism reigns, with a populace being fed consumer stereotypes via mass media. It is tempting to join in with Ritzer's somewhat doom and gloom analysis - he sees a big ball rolling and one difficult to stop or unstoppable. Schumacher recognises this seemingly unstoppable power of the forward motion and the arguments used to support it - 'progress', 'change,' 'you can't stand still'. However, he also states unequivocally:

'But it (modern industrial society) is in deep trouble and holds no promise of survival. It will become worse and end in disaster, until or unless we develop a new life-style which is compatible

with the real needs of human nature, with the health of living nature around us and with the resource endowment of the world.'

'The whole point is to determine what contributes progress. (Some) believe that the direction which modern technology has taken and is continuing to pursue towards ever greater size, ever higher speeds and ever increased violence, in defiance of all laws of natural harmony, is the opposite of progress. Hence the need for taking stock and finding a new orientation.'

So whilst Ritzer seems at least semi-defeated by the on-rush of modern Western society, Schumacher is arguing the need to take a good deep look and he later states:

'..... to redirect technology so that it serves man instead of destroying him requires primarily an effort of the imagination and an abandonment of fear'.

Perhaps whilst undertaking such ponderings, a beer could be taken to help the job along – maybe it could be a Bank's Brewery beer, apposite maybe, their motto being 'unspoilt by progress' -?

The individual has been under-valued ----- ?

Pirsig further claimed that there was a major change in understanding based on a misunderstanding when society attitude-shaping power was gained by Socrates and Plato from the Greek Sophists. He came, with help, to the realisation that the Sophist expression 'excellence', which according to Sophism could only be attained individually i.e. via the questing and energies of the individual, (leading to 'self-actualisation/realisation' - ?) was then converted to the notion of 'universal truth' i.e. now something external to the individual, who now has to subvert his or herself, to achieve/know 'excellence'.

Hence the value of the individual becomes diminished, now being subjugated to universal truth, rather than being an integral part of it, and so too, therefore, is individual intuition and instinct, and the use of logic (eg. 'economies of scale' rule - ?) in pursuit of universal truth takes on greater weight.

Pirsig is in effect claiming, then, that the individual and individual questing have in effect become de-franchised by this shift in philosophical emphasis and that this is one of the root causes of the modern imbalance syndrome i.e. the indefinable intuition, instinct and 'quality values' of the individual have lost their power and influence that is then needed for 'natural balance' to be achieved, and these could be the areas directly related to spirit - ?

Philosophical thought and enquiry having become rooted in reason and logic, mean't such a culture could then not easily cope with something as indefinable as individual intuition and therefore, and now living in a success-orientated 'outer-directed' phase, (in which individuals mainly take their cue from 'outer' influences such as the the prevailing culture, rather than their own 'inner' directed prompts), denied its existence and role, in order to preserve the 'success' illusion that a definable logic and reason approach was all-sufficient. The reduced value and power attributed to the individual then, according to Pirsig, also paved the way for the rise of organisational power and a 'largist' culture.

One organisation which through its managing director was aware of the need to balance organisational power with adequate individual power was a large farming operation in the West country, operating multiple livestock enterprises. Each head of enterprise had considerable autonomy in terms of how they ran their particular enterprise and management encouraged them to come up with ideas to implement to improve performance, as long as a good case

was made. If a case was rejected, a reason(s) was always communicated, along with thanks for the initiative and an offer of proposal training if it was felt that it could help any subsequent initiatives (in-house help with proposals was also on offer in recognition of the fact that experience and available time could be at times limited).

Staff in this business were also considerably encouraged and sometimes facilitated, to 'spread their wings', one section head doing just this by, for instance, learning to fly, for which a grass landing strip was made available on the farm. Overall, staff experienced considerable development and growth, one effect of which was that once they'd progressed so far, they often then went on to 'bigger and better things' elsewhere.

'Wasn't there though a downside,' the managing director was asked, 'losing trained and skilled staff?'

'Not really', was his response. He felt that if staff stayed and the limits of the work situation inhibited their progress and growth, the risk would be that they would grow frustrated, dissatisfied and then demotivated. Far better that they seek new challenges and growth elsewhere and then release a position, which could then become a learning curve for someone else – a 'win, win, win' situation.

Yes, mistakes and mishaps occurred along the way, the same as in any learning situation, but the negative effects of these, he felt, were far more than outweighed by the positive productivity gained from a motivated staff on an upward curve.

Virtually all the ex-staff kept in touch with the firm, significantly aided by being invited to the Xmas works 'do', and receiving the informal bi-monthly newsletter, and at the 'boss's' eventual funeral - the church wasn't big enough to fit in all the mourners by a long chalk.

Working within this business proved to be a 'quality' experience for the staff, contributing probably significantly to a great collective spirit, and for which they then 'naturally' repaid by giving their best efforts at work – a classic 'win-win' situation.

Automatic success-----?

Other 'real-life' quality/quantity balances can exist, such as in the areas of objectives and time periods, which might be illustrated by commercial practices. In enterprise/business practice there are probably no guarantees that initiatives will 'work out' – at one stage for instance, over half the diversification initiatives on UK farms proved to be non-viable. The person/people setting up a venture naturally want 'success' to repay them for their effort, for their own self-esteem and for their social standing, and so on, but a recognition that success isn't a 'given' which can then inspire and promote good market research, risk appraisal, enterprise planning and financial planning and assessment, for instance, will greatly enhance the chances of real success, and this can apply equally to lifestyle enterprises as it does to more conventional business forms (see Freerange Lifestyle Enterprise Planning – 'E' – book available from this website).

Time periods can also be of relevance – what can seem to be enterprise success in the short-term can at times turn into longer-term more limiting situations:

B ran a very tight ship, being keen on achievement and efficiency, and was achieving high output with an economic workforce in his farm business. He worked hard to high standards and expected the same of his staff, who were initially motivated to work long hours for good achievement levels and good money. After awhile, though, some of the key staff started to leave, seemingly aiming to go to positions offering a better chance of an effective work/life balance, most of them being family men.

Then even with younger staff, seemingly keen to work long and hard for the chance of good money, de-motivation seemed to take hold, quite possibly due to an over-work scenario – 'all work and no play' which the high achievement goals had fostered. Staff turnover became an issue, as did recruitment in terms of being able to attract a quality

calibre of people, and the 'spirit' within the business declined significantly.

Within the short-term success scenario, then, were sown the seeds of longer-term business ill-health. Whilst profits may well have been high in the shorter term, some of the factors and conditions operating especially with regard to staff, mean't that such a performance level was not sustainable, the message being that what's happening currently can impact not just in the immediate period, but also reverberate maybe in the longer-term.

Micro level-----

One of the themes running through these pages is that the individual, and her/his spirit, whilst being a micro-organism and virtually bottom of the pile in terms of power, is important, and to re-iterate Pirsig, is the guardian of 'quality', and even, 'spirit', without which there could be the spectre of the creation of a hard, over-competitive and uncaring world – perhaps some might argue that this road is already well travelled, heading for some sort of scenario akin to Aldous Huxley's 'Brave New World', in which the world comprised of three huge power blocks, and individual rights and needs were subsumed. The siren call of 'big is best', 'might is right', maybe in a logical sense, though, hard to resist, in that patently in a power-driven world 'big' could be likely to fare a lot better than 'small', and could be a safer place in which to be.

Ploughing the furrow-----?

'The perceived imbalance inherent in an analytical, competitive culture over-based on science, rationality/logic and high financial goals, potentially leads to inhumanity and strife, and to a diminishing of the human spirit'

is then basically what commentators such as Schumacher and Pirsig have been saying, and given a world seemingly increasingly more materialistic, allied with the reality of a finite level of world resources, it's perhaps hard not to heed the warnings of people maybe regarded as pessimists, to the effect that conditions for increasing world strife could well be in existence, and that therefore Schumacher's exhortation to 'Stop, Look and Think' in terms of what's happening and where it might lead, becomes ever more real. Maybe it's a bit of a hope that mankind collectively will do such a thing, but nevertheless the freeranger could/can still plough her/his own furrow to some extent or other, at the same time nurturing their own spirit, doing it for themselves and their loved ones. Maybe succour too can be gained from the art of Zen, which says that in reality, everything – the whole of life, including the seeming mundanities – is sacred and holy and therefore commands respect – and, the individual is then important.

It's said that such a 'reverance' state is realised through love, care and compassion and in such a materialistic, rational world, they are perhaps key missing balancing ingredients within the 'mass' culture – the quality of mercy isn't being overstrained as it were. That's maybe not too surprising – the relatively recent survey mentioned previously found that over seventy per cent of staff felt 'unvalued' in the workplace, presumably helping to confirm the non-existence or low-level existence of a caring society.

Could freerangers, in fact, be amongst those aiming to reverse the uncaring society trend, by their work on self-knowledge and self-awareness, in the process gaining self-respect, integrity and increased 'spirit', which would then surely spill over to others – ? Maybe too, it could be a little tricky to experience 'higher' wavelengths such as 'personal spirituality', if the general culture proceeds mainly on lower wavelengths – ?

Freerangin' on-----'The Freerange Spirit'

Walking down the fields just down the lane, the vivid greens of the hedges, of the trees, and of the fields, dazzling in the sun of this late springtime – no-one around, no traffic sounds, just an array of abundance, bathed in sunshine and birdsong. This place seems to have a certain presence, a sense, maybe, of something bigger, something universal -?

And who can say, even in these scientific, rational, logical times, with certainty, 'there is no spirit, or no such thing as 'soul' - ?'

How often in the past has the phrase 'the human spirit' been referred to- mysterious, mystical, ineffable – and why not? Some say:

'Who are we to say that we know everything or that we should know everything?'

and then there's that old phrase –

'the more you know, the less you know'.

One older farmer had one of the best herds of cows for many a mile – a top man- and yet always he'd be saying *'well I'm blessed, I dunno, for sure'*. He seemed to well know the dangers of *'a little learning is a dangerous thing'*, which is probably one of the reasons he was a real top man, still yet with an open mind.

Spirit matters -----

'The spirit of America' –a phrase referring to that independent, homesteading type of life lead by its pioneers - leading too to another phrase of the genre: 'pioneer spirit' - undoubtedly in the freerange mould (in one survey of smaller American family farms awhile back, a large percentage (40%+) placed 'independent living' higher in priority than 'making high profits'). People with a lot of life – a strong life force, are said to be 'spirited', someone can give a 'spirited' performance', and, on the other side of the coin, 'spirits can be broken'. A 'soaring spirit', an 'indomitable spirit'. It's been said that spirit's akin to the 'tick' -when a clock's parts are all assembled in the right order, there's nothing materially extra, yet there then comes something 'extra', then it comes 'alive' – it gets 'the tick'.

Yet, particularly talking about spirit within people, within individuals, what is 'spirit'? Scientists don't appear to be able identify it, define it, or analyse it. Because science may not be able to 'pin it down' can, though, spirituality yet be easily and conveniently written off? Maybe rightly, it's not something 'man' is easily able to 'crack' - ?

What about another possible reason why it might not be in vogue – it's not convenient maybe- , and in busy fast-paced lives, convenience matters, with little time or will to 'stop and think', particularly if the incoming message may be seen to challenging any current mode of existence - ? 'Spirituality' can seem to have differing forms, too – there's 'organisational' spirituality as promoted by organised religious faiths. Others, though, aver that spirituality is experienced at the 'micro' level in the form of personal spiritual experience, for instance.

So much has been written referencing spirituality, so many religions have championed it, so many gurus have promoted it, and in so many small, everyday ways, possibly often written off as 'mundane', may an ineffable spiritual force in life be felt. Could it then be a limitation to just write it off – a form of 'throwing out the baby with the bathwater' ? Some perhaps might say that some 'higher force' is anyway needed, not only to get people to strive 'higher' thereby creating a better world, quite a seemingly useful goal in itself, and presumably too, maybe, to stop mankind 'descending' into an anti-civilisation state - ? Maybe too, 'striving' is necessary to reach fulfillment - ?

As H.G.Wells had it: 'Our happiness lies in our striving'

Life as a journey-----?

Can, though, as often seems to be said and/or written, the spiritual only be 'personally experienced', and therefore in actuality, it's an individual, unique matter? (and be therefore out of the realms of statistics or scientific rational analysis - ?). An eastern-originated concept holds that to fully experience it, a 'journey of the soul' is needed which usually takes the broad form:

Mass > Individual > Spiritual

The individual in earlier life identifies with the norms of society, then as she/he gains personal 'inner' strength applies his/her own values and judgements more, which can then lead to spiritual experiences of 'bigger' proportions, and such a process has been recognised in some cultures as a 'natural' sequence, with some faiths averring that the 'soul' lives many lifetimes in a sequence which 'develops' it to its highest form.

Such a process might be seen to be broadly in line with Maslow's self-actualisation needs (see the 'The Freerange Individual', The Freerange Spirit – pt. 1, available from the 'books' page on this website), coming as the 'advanced' set of needs, and could fit with any freeranging concept to do with self-discovery and self-development . Maslow himself reported phenomena he became absorbed by: developed people reported the existence of 'peak' experiences of intense and mystical nature, and these were people identified by Maslow as having high psychological states of health – he was allegedly the first psychologist to research and investigate human mental health, hitherto psychological research had tended to focus on the problems areas, human mental ill-health.

Some of the eastern spiritual teachers assert that 'the journey of the soul' can take many lifetimes, a statement that non-spiritualists might have some difficulty with, although such could explain why people can be so different, particularly in terms of self and wider awarenesses. An illustrative 'levels of awareness' tale comes from one eastern-originated spiritual book, Osho's The Path of Paradox:

A learned man, a professor, in the east who'd been troubled and 'stuck' for some time in a quest to understand life through study, even though he'd read all the important texts, then decided to visit a renowned mystic to see if he could help. The spiritual mystic lived deep in a wood, a foreign environment to the urban-living professor, who was not at ease there.

He suddenly came across a clearing in which a man was chopping wood. He asked the wood chopper whether he knew whether the mystic was at home. The man answered obliquely by showing the professor his axe and telling him what a fine and suitable tool it was. The professor tried again only to have the axe thrust close to his face, greatly increasing his unease, whilst the man almost commanded the professor to observe, and feel, how marvellously sharp and 'suitable' the instrument was.

The professor fled, coming across the mystic's home soon after, asking someone there if he was around. The person responded by enquiring whether or not the professor was ok, as he looked somewhat pail around the gills, the professor then recounting his frightening experience. The other person then informed the professor that he had indeed already met the mystic, the very same person as the woodchopper, and that the mystic had been showing that indeed he was fully 'in', by his level of awareness and consciousness with what he was doing.

'The modern life journey-----'

Life today is generally acknowledged to be lead at a 'busy' pace, and some have charged that western-style cultures, with their strong focus on money accumulation both at the corporate and the individual levels, produce climates wherein the essential dynamic has become 'live to work' rather than 'working to live', as perhaps illustrated by the noted phenomenon of 'presenteeism', in which people feel they have to be at work 'all hours' to 'get on'. A busy-paced

life might well suit those with plenty of energy and keen on the 'excitement buzz' a such a life can induce, but to others such a relentlessly fast pace could presumably be stressful, and stress does seem to have become something of a modern problem (is relentless 'change', relentless fast-pace 'natural'? - are periods of 'consolidation' & 'getting breath back' needed for a longer-term sustainable effective life - ?)

One of the antidotes , again of eastern origin, offered to cope with and allay stress is that of meditation, of which there seems to be many varieties. The general idea appears to be that the pace of life can end up 'sweeping' people along at too fast a pace with which they can cope, taking over, as it were, their lives, then inducing classic 'out-of-control' stress conditions. One of the ideas behind meditation is that it provides the individual opportunity to 'step out' of any fast-paced onflow, to then re-charge batteries, to gain self-security by 'finding and anchoring their own selves', to gain then a feeling of gaining/ re-gaining some control over their lives.

A major meditation aspect that is also often highlighted is that such a process may lead to the very small organism that is the individual then developing the ability to connect with a larger universal-type life-force, often referred to as 'Tao' (pronounced 'Dow') in eastern spiritual writings, and roughly relating to a 'natural' universal energy force that influences 'how things happen'. Such a connection, it's said, can then lead to human health and fulfillment, and to 'higher' 'bliss' experiences via the individual 'transcending' to a higher energy plane. This can seem to be maybe someway from modern more materialistically orientated 'bliss-es', but nevertheless such 'higher' level spiritual experiences have been meaningful to some. Abraham Maslow , for instance , as has been referred to, via his researches amongst 'psychologically healthy' people, noted that many of them reported having 'peak experiences' with 'mystic' qualities.

'Modern times meditations-----'

Meditation is said to have the advantages that it is a non-competitive process, which might be valuable in itself in a competitive age, and that it can be practised by individuals on their own. One relatively simple meditation practice that can be practised by individuals by themselves, say, a couple of times a day to help counter any 'modern day' stress effects, is a practice known in the east as 'zaazen'. This practice may sound almost too simple but maybe not quite so simple in practice, in that it involves just 'sitting and being'.

It simply is to sit or lie comfortably and then aim awareness onto the moment – one way to help this is to focus, for instance, awareness on the sensations of the body by aiming to look in turn at what the various parts of the body are experiencing – 'there's a small niggling pain in right thumb' etc. The mind is often in 'auto' mode (having a mind of its own - ?) which is likely to be on-going, but with practice, there is said to be a gradual 'general calming' effect, and awareness can then go 'within' further and the process of 'centre-ing' becomes feasible, which can help the individual to become more 'still' , helping probably then to counter any cultural 'fast-flow' effects and over time, helping to facilitate 'higher connection' (mentioned above) , and therefore any spiritual connections.

The early stages, though, of such individual meditation practice is said to be potentially tricky, in that the 'fast-flow' conditions can have a 'mind' effect i.e. the mind with its thoughts may well be 'whirring' at quite a pace. The general advice appears to be to accept that any 'mental peace' could well take awhile to develop and to meditate aiming to try to 'observe' the operation of the mind , and its machinations, a process which will then, if persisted with, lead to a 'quietening of the mind' , and a feeling of greater 'self-management' via increased self-awareness, which in turn will lead in time to an increased ability to access 'inner peace' . ('it's hard to stay sane, in an insane world', as they say.)

'Bigger' can be beautiful-----??'

Others have written about the need to 'connect to the bigger' to experience more fully the nature of spirituality, no doubt recognising the micro-organism reality that the individual is, but also the possibility that this very small micro-organism can 'open up' and connect with a much bigger force. Such a process has been described as an opening-up –

a 'flowering' of the individual, which brings them 'into the light' to receive energy available at higher wavelengths.

Such a happening would appear to occur, according to eastern type spirituality teaching, when the individual has done work at self-exploration/self-development, reaching a relatively advanced state of self-knowledge, awareness and acceptance, at which point the 'self' can be transcended and 'universal' energy can be experienced, the individual then experiencing well-being, health, energy and bliss (this may well be the so-called 'enlightenment' experience - ?)

This, though, would appear to remain a relatively rare phenomena, maybe not totally surprising in today's culture focused maybe on a lower energy level at the material plane, and, some would say, originated in fear, the natural medium of power-based systems - ? The 'overcoming of fear' may be one of the keys to unlocking the ability to experience 'higher' level energy wavelengths – Maslow's 'peakers', for instance, were generally capable and knowledgeable individuals who'd met challenges and difficulties in life, getting through them and gaining from such a journey, giving them personal growth, achievement and self-respect in the process translating into real personal inner strength and confidence and therefore ability to face and handle the experience of fear, not then to be controlled by it.

Such a 'freeranger-type' individual self-exploration route would, though, seem to have lost some ground in the secular, more material-level times in the world today. Perhaps the 'material plane' could represent a more 'short-term' type of contentment, with the 'self-development' route leading to a longer-term 'personal fulfilment' route - ?

'Yer pays yer money', again ----- perhaps a bit more, though, maybe on the former path-?

Freeranger spirituality

If spirituality is in reality personal and individual experience felt by those who do embark on a personal journey of discovery and development, for which a degree of open-minded approach could likely be necessary, then the freerange approach becomes particularly relevant. This is then likely to involve, for some at least, both the importances of personal questing and personal experience, which then would appear to also encompass the wide, need array, involving, for instance, social and personal development facets, rather than confined, say, to any 'out-for-self' single-dimensional approach.

Science may not be able to give answers to whether any personal quest will be rewarded with a return or whether it's material or spiritual; maybe the real spirit of such endeavour could be that of open-minded 'see where it gets' exploration – to discover 'what's there' for self, and is therefore a form itself of travelling into the unknown, but often maybe buoyed with a curious initial feeling of 'trust in the universe'.

To develop a real ability to be able 'to keep one's own counsel' may well take a considerable input and effort over time by the individual, and an ability (as above) to be able to 'centre'. There may, too, need to be a willingness to experience 'openly' (i.e. 'warts an' all'), rather from the self's own 'closed' position, a process which may then offer sufficient inner strength and momentum for the individual to effectively inwardly accurately assess and appraise, to accept and work with 'reality' (rather than, say, any self-constructed position), and to in fact then become 'self-realised', which then in effect could be a longer-term goal of many freerangers.

Spirituality not necessarily the 'magic' word-----?

The perception for some that the western world cultures have tended to become superficial, one- dimensional, and non-spiritual can lead some to seeking for more life meaning, and often to spiritual teachers and disciplines – the whole 'new age' movement may have gained momentum, for instance, as a reaction to an 'outer-directed' culture in which people were only validated by responding to the signals of the culture ('outer' stimuli), which by default left

unfulfilled 'inner directed' needs, such as unique personal development, intuition and spiritual needs.

Courses and literature on personal spiritual growth seem to have become in some instances quite big business in themselves, presenting again the quandary as to which goals are paramount – the growth needs of the individual or the commercial goals of organisations/individuals involved in processes meeting such needs - ? As spiritual growth seemingly involves trust, faith and openness, people can presumably end up more exposed and vulnerable in this area than in normal commercial transactions, both possibly in a material 'cash' sense, and also in a 'conditioning' sense, susceptible to ideas/thoughts which may not be 'best fit' for them at that particular time.

How then, to discern genuine providers of quality spiritual growth support? One question that could for instance, be asked in the seekers mind is :

what is the real goal of the providers being looked at – is it to make their own money, and/ or to practice control over others , or is it to facilitate genuine spiritual healing and growth for people - ?

Because 'making money' seems to be these days so often generally accepted as a/the prime business goal, and it's presumably possible that writers can, even unwittingly , be involved in strategies to cater more for their own security, this can be a tricky area to evaluate. Genuine providers may well though, have the goal of spiritual growth as their prime goal, their 'end', with making money as their on-going 'means', not a goal at all. Paradoxically, such an approach can transmit to others, who may well then 'spread the word', such that the spiritually-goaled provider could well end up making more than the money-goaled providers, who may then end up having to put on offers, to 'hard sell' and to incant 'false' sentiments such as, for example, 'have a nice day' (it's now been identified through research that making employees say, for instance, such false sentiments , can damage longer-term psychological health).

Spirituality as a control mechanism-----?

The ten commandments are possibly a good example as any to use to illustrate how a spiritual discipline, in this case Christianity, has been used as guiding mechanism for cultural control. Maybe it could be argued that the net effect was positive and that generally civilisation was promoted and enhanced - ? More recent events, though, in the Catholic church concerning the abuse of minors, serve to remind that power and control can often be subject to abuse, the old 'power corrupts' syndrome. At the level of the individual seeking spiritual support and teaching, again a degree of care and caution might be needed.

Reading a piece, for instance, by a prominent current New Age spiritual teacher and figurehead, the notion of control also seems to figure, stating as he does that 'the following conditions must be accepted as true' and then outlining the specific conditions. It seems he is laying down the rules and conditions, rather than, say, seeking to gain and allow the space for the individual to grow into, so a basic premise of freeranging – the right to think for self and to find own answers, may be compromised.

He may, of course, quite possibly not be on track to rule the world – it may rather be an expression of his own anxiety for the end result, for instance, but such strict admonitions may still interfere with the individuals own free-thinking processes, and therefore could potentially add barriers, rather than the reverse. Might then blueprints or prescriptions be potentially counter-productive to real freeranging, in that in themselves they do not offer the 'freerange' conditions conducive to personal growth, the essence of freeranging-----? The following rural case-study can illustrate the potential dangers of prescriptive advice, even though it may have been well-meaning:

F was a dairy farmer who had started his business on a shoestring but then found that although his enterprise was profitable, it was not viable – the profit he was making was insufficient to meet his yearly needs (see Freerange

Lifestyle Enterprise Planning, E-book available from this site). F took official advice, running into an advisor who had a standard policy that business growth was good, and that the borrowings involved to facilitate the growth were then 'automatically' valid. F expanded his dairy herd, only to find himself ultimately in a position of more work, more concerns, more costs, particularly finance costs, but profit margins insufficiently expanded to meet the additional cost incurred of expansion, so then having to borrow further to keep in business.

Such a system over time is unsustainable and F found himself in a very tight hole indeed, with the bank putting considerable pressure on him to reduce his borrowing commitments, so 'tightening the noose'. Although by this time F was technically bankrupt, he fought tigerishly to save his business, employing some unusual tactics such as verbally abusing representatives who called on him to try to get some money – not textbook stuff but maybe to the relief of the immense pressure on him.

Amazingly, there then occurred a couple of strokes of luck such as being offered more land to farm at low rent, and slowly, slowly, F pulled himself out of the mire – a quite incredible feat of endurance and perseverance.

Was it 'luck' or were the 'Gods' with him? There was certainly a feeling that one at least of his benefactors may have been a guardian angel riding to his aid in admiration of his doughty struggle – he no doubt admired and responded to F's formidable spirit. The ultimate lesson learned was that standard blanket-type advice can be dangerous, and that decisions need to be tailored to the unique position and needs of the business at that particular point in time- they need to be effective 'business freeranger' decisions. And - maybe angels come in multifarious form - ?

Spiritual support

Did anyone guarantee life would be 'a stroll in the park', a 'bowl of cherries'? The road and journey of the freeranger maybe isn't necessarily easy, but is 'wanting it easy' a pitfall in itself? One of the Buddha's four universal principles, for instance, was 'life is suffering'. Might sometimes personal difficulties and hardship for instance be the instigator of a search for help, and then for answers - ? (and the individual is then 'internally guided' to the help he/she needs - ?)

'----enlightenment does not come from imagining 'figures of light', but from making darkness conscious' (Jung)

For some of those seeking spiritual growth, it may be that they could choose the type of support they feel most in tune with – some might opt for 'live' sessions, possibly in groups, others might prefer more indirect help sources such as the written word, feeling that things can be digested and assimilated at their own pace. Any offered help that genuinely aims to provide support for the healing, growth and development of others could perhaps be described as spiritual in itself. Might, though, spiritual help and support not always come necessarily in guise –sometimes they might perhaps be in dis-guise - ? :

A had had, and was having, a difficult time, with many pressures operating in his life, not least of which was a job which was demanding in its own right, and demanding in terms of time and commitment, making any work/life balance tricky, and at which he was struggling. He was in a situation with a young family and a partner, and with a degree of financial and security hardship.

He reported that the level of stress had produced physical symptoms in him, which then in turn heightened his anxiety and he felt himself on a downward plane, describing the experience as being in a dark tunnel with little/no light at its end. Seeing others happy and laughing was problematic for him, for instance, feeling as he did cut off from any happiness, contributing then to him reaching the point of feeling 'total failure' and of 'going under'.

Just then, though, he one day stopped his car without intent at a small town bookshop, walked in 'as a zombie, not

under self guidance', as he said, walked up to a wall stacked with hundreds of second-hand books and started to look at the first book he pulled out, immediately recognising that within this book (a self-help book for anxiety/ depression written by an Australian female psychologist), there was a liferaft to grasp. It took sometime, but gradually with what he reported as the tough but compassionate support the book provided, and in spite of many reverses, he pulled out his depressive illness.

The sufferer in the above case-study felt that the author of the book had reached right down to him, where he was, rather than given him any perfect blueprint, and then given practical help and support to get out of his 'deep, black hole', and on reflection the whole process had been a real learning journey, culminating in him gaining a new level of awareness and consciousness – a journey of spiritual growth.

What an amazing feat by the author – rescuing and enhancing a person via the written word - ?

Spiritual words support

Others have trodden further down the spiritual path. Osho, who founded a 'spiritual city' in America which ultimately didn't work out as planned due, presumably, to 'human error', wrote within his considerable written output, about the paradoxes of life, particularly the role and place of 'Zen'. He focused on the 'now' phenomenon that Zen promotes, noting that people often mentally spend much if not most of their lives in the past, regretting, say, what's happened, or in the future preoccupied with expectations, often fuelled by externalities such as, say, a conforming and demanding culture, which causes people to operate on external (to them) prompts set by the culture, rather than their own internal values and prompts.

Maybe in fact, both external and internal prompts could be relevant in their right places, it's perhaps a case of whether there's an adequate balance between them - ? Osho, for instance, held the Buddhist-type feeling that life- all of life – was sacred and special, and that reverence for life was a natural state which had been obscured by too many external factors operating on people. The way to counteract was to 'go within' and cultivate the (individual's) centre, which then acts like a rock, a stability, to help counteract the individual being tossed around too much by any 'frenzied seas of external events'.

Individuals who do have this function, and are said to be 'centered', often do seem to come over as people of inner personal strength, something freerangers may well be interested in. To cultivate such a personal facility, Osho advocates meditation practice and awareness practice, to offset the mind's over-busy activity, prompted by an over-fast changing living environment in modern day life.

T, now passed away, rest his soul, was, erm, a dying breed, which is probably now extinct – he was a rural roadman. No motorised wheels, just shank's pony and a bike, no equipment of any size, just a couple of varying sized scythes, a spade and one or two other bits and pieces. All his working days spent biking to his not too distant quiet current working spot, clearing and renovating ditches and culverts, a spot of hedging and so forth.

He lived in a small, simple country cottage by himself but with his great friends – his dog, his cats, his chickens and his pigeons. Great man to meet – but not to expect too many words though – more of a joint meditation, and best not to be too verbose. What a life - hopeless, of course, when measured by modern material standards –he had virtually nothing of any great monetary value- a few thousand savings possibly accumulated over many years, but he was someone else to meet, and somehow his inner calm and peace transmitted - for awhile.

A road less traversed-----

M. Scott Peck wrote his well-known work of a similar title to the above, and implying that any spiritual journey might well be a case of traversing higher pastures and byways, tying in with Maslow's concept of human self-realisation

being the most 'advanced' human need. Kunihiro Yamate, a Japanese mystic, lays it on the line for the western material mode in his book with the somewhat challenging title of 'The Way of No-Mind'. In fact, he's in tune with 'T' above, saying that western (and now eastern) man's efforts to gain wealth and power are moves to allay inner insecurity and anxiety, but that such are 'doomed' moves in that such wealth and power only serve to accentuate man's separateness – from each other and from the wider world and universe, and will prove to be counter-productive, ultimately, only adding to man's insecurity and anxiety.

He suggests that it is only in 'connectedness and 'oneness' are humans secure, rich and 'whole', and that rather than spend big efforts accumulating goods and riches, time's better spent raising awareness and consciousness to recapture the original state in which man lived/lives in 'cosmic well-being and joy'. That's just a bit to think about, and no doubt quite a few may not relate directly to such sentiments. He's saying – like Schumacher – 'Stop – is there a 'wrong road' scenario - ?' It could help to explain why contact with nature seems to abide as an on-going strong need for some, maybe quite a few, at least, and a need which may often particularly feature for freerangers - ?

'Hollow' victories-----?

People who've cracked the wealth bit have reported at times then experiencing an empty, 'so what?' type of feeling, not experiencing full fulfillment or contentment. Others may feel they are happy to be in the materially enriched state, and plenty, presumably, feel the reverse if insufficient material resources are available to them. Is there, though, any potential of longer-term counter-productivity via 'over materialistic attachment', particularly maybe if there's little tradition and practice of freeranger-type internal self-knowledge - ?

Any material, 'success' orientated culture presumably potentially 'ramps up' expectation and hence possibly anxiety levels, as well as the pace of life. Another, possibly more long-term effective approach, might be not to focus so strongly on the end 'success' result, but rather to adopt a more of a less fashionable 'take life as it comes' stance, and see what ensues-? From Lao Tsu, back in 5-6th century B.C, a long time ago, courtesy of John Heider's modern 'Lao-Tsu' take in his The Tao of Leadership book :

'The wise leader does not make a show of holiness or pass out grades for good performance. That would create a climate of success and failure. Competition and jealousy follow.'

Lao-Tsu might presumably not be too good a fit with any modern, competitive 'materialistic success' culture then. Not surprising, some might say, he does come from 2,500 or so years ago. What, though, if he's right? Rudyard Kipling talking of 'those two imposters, failure and success' might too have been on his side - ?

'Life is hard', was another Scott-Peck quote, presumably alluding to its complex multi-dimensional nature, with maybe modern culture's fast-pace and strong limited-dimension focus an financial gain having a 'skewing' effect - ? As previously suggested, it's possibly/probably feasible that people operate at different levels, particularly maybe on the spiritual plane. Still, as ever, the argument is that the individual is, within acceptable social limits, 'free to quest', probably involving a degree of honesty and courage, and then to come up with their own take and their own path, which does not necessarily always have to be the most common way, the 'motorway' path.

'Straight are the roads of improvement, crooked are the ways of genius', said Blake.

Maybe it could be appropriate to let Lao-Tsu have a last word ? :

'If you want to be free, live simply-----use what you have---seek to gain some contentment from where you are . Of course, the world is full of novelty and adventures. New opportunities come along every day. So what - ?

'Freerange Spirituality - Within the Grasp ----- ?'

Matters 'spiritual' could be said to have tended to over the years become institutionalised within the great religions of the world, some of which have been charged with over ritualising and under 'modern times application'. Religion is no doubt important in many peoples' lives, and for some – many? - religious rituals, for instance, can provide a needed constant and security in a fast-moving culture and world. Others may need a dynamic form of spirituality, linking more dynamically to the 'NOW', whilst there are also probably those who may consider spirituality to be some sort of 'nebulous dream' and prefer more concrete, materialistic ground – people's orientations can presumably differ significantly. It might be argued that the 'materialistic route' could represent a 'mass' view in western-style cultures, which have in recent times plainly focused pretty strongly on material gain, that in itself then by default relegating 'spiritual matters' to lower priority, augmented maybe by an era of rational, scientific thought and assessment in recent decades ('head' geared, rather than 'head, heart, and spirit' balance, for instance, as some eastern traditions have it.)

In the UK there's even recent University level research which offers the conclusion that people of spiritual natures are 'less stable' (presumably than secular-orientated people - ?). Maybe less 'stability' in the form of a range of operation extending beyond rational and logic, could though be ultimately beneficial to the individual, in that then more dimensions might be accessible - ? With then a possible 'spiritual alienation' occurring due to the twin forces of religious ritualisation and the use of the rational, scientific mode, some have reasoned that whilst in western-style cultures there has been 'spiritual waning', that this could be still though, insufficient reason to then conclude that the 'spiritual' is bogus and that there could then be a real danger of 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater' - ? They could/would also point to the rise of 'personal spirituality' within western-style cultures as evidence again that some may find the 'reason' based approach limiting in terms of accessing 'higher' human values and behaviours, pointing also therefore to a possible limited ability of the material plane to fully satisfy human needs.

The apparent difficulty in assessing/verifying the reality/existence of spirituality within a rational, scientific culture has been well documented, and is perhaps encapsulated from a quote by John Anthony West in Linda Tucker's work *Mystery of the White Lions* (Hay House):

'-----the problem with the scientifically minded---- what they call 'reason' and 'right thinking' is not rational at all; it is simply the rationalisation of the 'spiritually flat earth' of their own inner world. Since they experience nothing transcendent or divine, they deduce there is nothing, which is actually just negative credulity, not science.'

Einstein, too, thought that 'balance' was needed:

' Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind'

Osho, again, has a similar theme :

'If man is only matter, all meaning disappears from life ---- life affirmative, life celebratory people are needed ---- man is the only answer to the questions surrounding humanity'

('Ordinary Enlightenment for Extraordinary Times')

There appears to be a growing movement believing that whilst spirituality can't necessarily be scientifically proven, it can be verified as a personal, individual experience, which can be accessed by the individual embarking on their own 'spiritual quest'. This may well link to the nebulous state of 'life trust/faith' which some people experience and could be available to all(?). This piece, then, looks to support the 'questing' ('freerange') natures that people can have and the 'exploration' bug in general, and in particular, as it relates to the area of 'personal spirituality'.

'Spirituality - does it exist-----?'

According to the rhetoric above, spirituality may not be able to be 'proven', but rather experienced, so the intention here is to proceed on this assumption. Some spiritual writers have asserted that humans are anyway 'hardwired' for higher-level capabilities such as, for instance, being able to experience compassion, which seems largely the prerogative of the human animal, even if under some cultures it doesn't appear to be in over evidence (the 'quality of mercy is not strained' syndrome', which presumably could be more evident, the more a culture is actively 'competitivised' - ?)

Some have considered that western-style modern man is 'mired in mainstream materialism' and suffering from 'affluenza', and that both of which states could then act as 'inhibitors' to spiritual development. The use of the 'inhibitor'/'promoter' model as developed by Prof. Fred. Herzberg could prove useful. Herzberg used it in relation to human motivation, identifying some factors, interestingly including money, which he identified via his research as 'inhibitor' factors – i.e. factors which could 'inhibit' (prevent) motivation, but not long-term 'promote (enhance) it. Other factors, such as for instance 'recognition', he identified as 'promoter' factors.

The dynamics of his model could prove interesting and useful too, in that he was suggesting that the 'inhibiter' factors needed to be at 'ok' acceptable levels before the 'promoter' factors could then effectively kick in. It's therefore interesting to speculate as to whether the individual's search for 'personal spirituality' could operate in similar fashion, with money being of prime interest, in the sense that whilst lack of money could 'inhibit' spiritual search (needed attention being then focused on survival areas), any 'over' pursuit of money could then not be relied on to furnish 'higher' levels of human fulfillment - ?

CASE-STUDY:

O is an English middle-aged male who was initially reluctant to speak about his own particular experiences, through fear of being misunderstood, as it turned out later. He'd always 'stood out', though, in a quiet sort of way, so it seemed as if there was something different about him. Eventually, he agreed to talk about his experiences, and straight off, he said that he'd experienced some sort of 'transcended state' experience, in which he'd felt so many positive feelings he'd never experienced before : boundless energy, health, happiness/bliss, 'oneness' with everything and everyone, and unconditional love.

'I know it can sound a bit crazy' he said, *'and too good to be true, but that's how it was'*.

He'd also been able to see peoples' auras (surrounding energy patterns) and felt 'totally clear and resolved' – *'it was like the last piece of a jigsaw was put in place and I suddenly became 'complete' and full of well-being. It felt like being in a great 'state of grace', completely 'whole' and 'at one' with everything', a hugely greater experience than i'd ever come near to experiencing'*.

It did not last, however, although in retrospect he felt if handled right, it could have done.

'It was obviously great and lasted a few months, but then I think that I actually got scared of it, in that I seemed to be so different from anybody and everybody else. Looking back, i'd done a lot of work with the help of a mentor , which i'd had to do because I hadn't been in a good place , and I'd come through a lot of fear, and with the help of more mentors via affirmations, I must have just 'clicked' and come to this 'clear' place. It was an experience beyond any I could have imagined, but it was so powerful, and so empowering, that I was really unprepared for it and I suppose didn't really know how to handle it -it was almost then as if it was too powerful to handle without some further experience'.

'Real self-realisation-----?'

It could look as though O had in a way, sort of 'stumbled' on a of 'state of 'transcended consciousness', part of eastern mysticism , in which the self experiences a 'transcended ' state free from the loads and stresses of 'ordinary' life and fully 'connected' to a 'universal' beneficial energy source. Other sources, often from eastern -situated sages called mystics such as Kunihiro Yamate, talk about the bliss state being one in which the individual feels 'fully connected' and can feel health-giving energy and bliss as if they're running through the physical body. From the limited evidence, perhaps it could seem reasonably likely that there could be an experience similar to a 're-birth' which takes place, enabling the individual's past and current 'life conditionings' to be shed and/or left behind, and for the individual then to be able to experience at a 'higher universal' level - ? If this is so , maybe then the open-mind exploratory mode of 'freeranging' might be suited to lead to such 'higher-level' well-being states - ? Of course, it may all be a 'load of old hooey', – maybe this is where that condition known as 'natural faith' plays a part, necessary to sustain the (freerange) seeker on their 'journey of exploration' - ?

Let the good-----?'

The general gist to accessing the self-realising 'bliss/grace' state, according to eastern type mysticism , could appear to be the ability to relax to the point where the individual has faith in 'Tao' (universal law relating to 'how things work') , allowing it within his/her life, rather than the individual exercising control and/or 'forcing the pace'. This perhaps assumes a situation in which a level of 'life survival' needs is already reasonably met, otherwise their fulfillment may well take precedence - ? This state of 'self-relaxation' would seem to occur when insecurities and fears are no longer present (this might tie in with developmental psychologists' (such as Abraham Maslow) reporting finding the phenomena of 'peak experiences' amongst respondents in research exploring 'human mental (good) health' (might it also indicate that such 'higher consciousness' type of experiences occur when fear has been faced and 'gone through' - ? The renowned psychologist, Jung, for instance, was of the opinion that the 'enlightenment' experience came from 'making darkness conscious', rather than, for instance, 'imagining figures of light').

It's been said, though, that fast-moving and materialistically- focused western-style cultures are unlikely to be nurturing grounds for the realisation of 'bliss states', in that such cultures are not in themselves over-relaxing, and being focused at a 'low energy' (i.e. 'materialistic') and fast-paced level. Whilst, though, they may not predispose to the creation of 'bliss states' (also known as 'enlightenment' states - ?) , the ('freerange') individual can undertake 'work' towards them, which process in itself may have beneficial effects (eg.s lowering stress levels, creating authentic self strength) . 'Mass' cultures are just that, and as such are unlikely to be able to cater for the wide, bio-diverse range of individuals existing in reality. A 'common sense ' approach then may be for the questing ('freerange') individual to identify any aspects of the culture (which, of course, may be driven not necessarily by the majority) which they find themselves they may feel to be unhelpful, and then create a plan/programme to counter/avoid/improve those aspects. An example of such an appraisal and a plan/programme might look, for instance, as follows:

Potential identified culture-induced 'limitations':

- over fast pace to culture*
- 'distraction' factors eg. weight of media*
- strong 'influence' factor eg. weight of advertising*

- level of achievement/goal orientation of culture ('target' focus etc.)
- high materialism factor
- strong 'control' factor (eg. work)/ lack of 'life control'
- strong logic/rational bias to culture eg. 'economies of scale' 'big' bias
- assumed intelligence pitch level of culture

Such an analysis might represent someone looking for, say, 'quality' in life . An example of an 'ameliorating' plan/programme could, for instance, maybe be:

----- **meditation practice** (say, 15 – 20 mins 2* day) Meditation might be thought of as a mental process but in practice it's said to be more of an 'awareness' process, including 'mind' awareness. It can be used to effect a 'slowing down of the system' which can then help to counteract any 'fastflow' effects. In that it can also help over time to develop a stronger inner core of 'real self', it can then help the individual to 'anchor' her/his self, as opposed to being 'swept along' in any cultural 'fastflow'. If the individual feels that for them the culture is over-biased towards logic/ rationality, the meditation practice may well also help develop 'inner strength', as above, then facilitating 'quality' factors relevant to that individual such as, say, intuition, personal values and spontaneity .

One relatively simple meditation practice (as mentioned in previous section) which anyone can do), is that of 'zaazen', an eastern-originated practice which consists just of sitting comfortably and as relaxed as possible, then focusing awareness on the physical body taking it to various body areas – 'that little tingle in the left big toe' etc. (the body scan procedure from the 'Mindfulness' movement could well be similar), and also on any thoughts that occur.. The idea is that this can then counteract culture-induced over-active mental activity (and gives it a 're-charge rest') , leading also over time to a feeling of being in a position of 'overview' of 'mind' and hence 'the fuller self' being in more control.

Zaazen practice can also encourages the holistic experience of being more in the body, rather than , say, too much in the mind. In more ancient eastern times, for instance, the 'belly' was apparently seen as an important human centre . Other balances are said to be aided by such a meditation practice, such as 'heart, head and spirit', this sequence being said to be an appropriate one for 'balance', and again offering a 'counteracting' of the mind's often pre-eminent position.

----- **undertaking specific relevant activities** Some find spirituality via activities – climbing mountains, for instance, is said to often lead to spiritual experiences – or using situations. One recent TV presenter undertook, for instance, a long, solo motorbike journey through empty American deserts, and waxed lyrical about it providing the space, solitude and ambiance to get what he called the 'genuine real self, spiritual experience'.

----- **finding a suitable 'socially contributing ' activity** to counter-balance any perceived over self-focus. Psychologists (such as Maslow) investigating human mental health (as opposed to 'mental ill-health) found that people had 'higher' level social needs such as 'making a social contribution', and 'social recognition' (and which may have by default suffered a relegation in modern cultures more focused on self-gain - ?). Many people, though, evidently still have social values and often solve their social needs in their own ('bio-diverse') way. Perhaps it's also useful to remember that the individual's specialised work contribution is in itself a social contribution, (the awareness of

which maybe having been dulled somewhat in recent times by a low recognition element inherent in control type cultures - ?) and that the act of business is again a social transaction geared to meeting the needs of others.

----- **'compartment – ing'** If, for instance, parts of life have to be 'existed', as often may be the case, they can 'pigeon-holed' with the intention of limiting their effect on life :

C was passionately interested in nature and the environment, and had undertaken a degree in environmental studies. Unfortunately, though, she hadn't been able to get paid employment within that particular highly competitive work sector. Although initially downcast, she then rallied and came up with her own life solution. She got a weekend shift job doing long hours (three 10 hour 2 - 12 shifts) at boring, repetitive work, which then gave her plenty of time in the weekdays to undertake volunteer eco work and follow her own ecological interests. In a way, she now thinks, it's quite useful that the weekend work is so mindless, in that she can also use that time to mentally plan her eco schedule and to assimilate her recent eco activities.

----- **'time planning'** egs. limiting evening TV viewing/organising regular 'quiet time' . Organising 'meaningful content' time eg. regular walk in quiet, spatial environment at weekend, say. Self-organising work schedule (if possible) eg. two work periods/ day – one, say, 7 – 11, one 4-7, (or 10 – 3, then 7 – 9 – whatever suits) interspersed with domestic duties, 'replenishing' activities (egs. gardening, conversing, reading, smallholding, navel contemplation, playing sports, sailing , walking etc. etc.) Such 'life planning' activities may also presumably help confidence, feelings of self-worth and self-independence, and to facilitate effective work/life balance. (recent research, for instance, has confirmed common wisdom that over-work can lead to longer-term counter-productivity).

----- **'contra culture'** actions . A culture tends to be 'mass' orientated and therefore big and powerful. If it seeks to exercise quite a degree of control over people, it can be relatively easy to either get 'sucked along', and/or to lose 'self-worth/independence' , or even an adequate 'sense of self'. Quite often, those 'driving' the culture can be in that position without necessarily a majority of the population being in support of their policies. The idea then to make small gestures of 'rebellion' is to counter any of these potential 'unwanted' mass trends. To take a small example, if there's someone on TV, for instance, suffering from 'expertitis-itis' and treating viewers at a lower than appropriate level of intelligence and respect, it could help, for instance, to think of that classic definition of an expert : 'someone who knows more and more about less than less'. Coping with the plethora of TV ads can be aided by those minded with strategic use of the 'mute' button on the remote control (a useful example of taking simple action to limit 'cultural control' of the individual - ?) Being something of a reactionary, even in secret, may not always harm health---?.

----- **'beating the big boys'** . Even small firms are larger and more powerful than individuals – the individual is in fact characterised as being the lowest 'power-unit' within society. One Frenchman achieved fame and notoriety in his 90's by writing a work called 'Indignez-vous!' Just because the individual is 'small', she/he still has a voice, and has the right to use it, not to be 'emasculated by large organisations, who, he said, often become 'bully boys' due to their size and power. Just recently, the large oligopolistic energy firms in the UK have been charged with using their power to treating their customers as 'cash cows'. They argue that their duty is to make large profits for their shareholders, so again the individual tends to be 'bottom of the pile', and as also some have said concerning the financial sector's reported misdemeanours, that the majority (of so-called 'ordinary folk') have had to suffer the pain caused by the gain

by the minority. The 'free market' culture has by default seemingly relegated social factors in favour of financial outcome, again probably impacting hardest at the individual level - ? There have, though, been more than a few reported instances of brave individuals 'taking on' large organisations, and with much persistence, getting a result. Even at more modest levels, it can be 'empowering' to 'not play the game':

T was fed up at being sales cold called in his home . He decided to 'fight back'. As it happened, the next caller was keen to emphasise the fact that if T took up his offer, he could make 'pots of dosh'. T decided to play the moralist card and proceeded to take his caller to task for spreading the money message – didn't he know that 'money was the root of all evil?' .The call did not last long, and T felt some slight exhilaration at thwarting the 'big' system.

----- **take up 'self-argument/debate'**. Today's culture appearing to be relatively self-orientated, often seemingly conveys a message that what a person does, or thinks is 'automatically ok'. This may have resulted as a reactionary stance against more socially restricting times in the past (in the UK, for instance), when pressures on people to socially conform were probably strong. The potential downside to self-orientation, though, could be that the individual then stays in a pretty small pool of 'small ' judgements (along the lines of the individual being a relatively small organism compared to, for instance, the universe). To counter such a possible limitation, the individual can 'take his/her self on', as it were. For instance, if a particular person is of a certain political persuasion, they could try being and thinking like a 'political opponent' for a day. They could also challenge the thoughts and judgements they come up with by asking the question 'why?' (and maybe if relevant, keep asking it). Another interesting line could be for the individual to ask themselves how/why they came to have such thoughts/judgements and opinions. They could then further enquire into the possible limitations of the same. (modern 'must win' type of culture's 'success modes' such as personal strength/confidence and anti doubt and 'un-confidence', may have mitigated against people exploring 'self-doubt '- ?)

----- **choosing a specific lifestyle 'to suit'**. If, say, a modern culture doesn't seem to offer a good 'fit', then, if it's a 'free country', there may be an opportunity to select a lifestyle which offers the individual more, a route many 'downsizers' have undoubtedly followed. Any notion that this might not being a 'good, productive citizen' could be flawed, in that someone doing what they're interested in and motivated to do, could well mean they end up being more rather than less, productive.

S was one individual who eventually found the modern consumerism culture not particularly giving him a meaningful and fulfilling life, and then tried to analyse why this was so, even though his current lifestyle was 'culturally successful'. He came to the conclusion that he was on a treadmill chasing around , but for what? It seemed to have become for him a seemingly endless un-merry-go-round for more of what wasn't satisfying him in the first place. He found that his life had become over complex and that inside he was yearning for more simplicity, space , meaning and time. He decided to, and was able to, act, following now a 'downsizing' type of plan to bring more simplicity into his life and to gain the time to enjoy so-called 'ordinary life' more. He was successful in his efforts, and looking back, he said that his fast-paced former life he now realised hadn't really given him too much life satisfaction and appreciation, whereas his now calmer life had given him more of a chance to find personal fulfillment and meaning in life, even though he now lived at a lower material level.

(An interesting and stimulating book on this same theme by John Lane is entitled Timeless Simplicity, Dartington Hall Press).

One implication of the above could be that if the culture is too 'mass' based and at a level too restrictive for the individual seeking multi-dimensional complexity rather than, say, any culturally limited dimensioned over-simplicity, then the ground/area that individual has to work with is her/his own, given the assumption that mass culture is unlikely to change too quickly. Reacting then 'against' the culture is not then per se incorrect – it may be needed in some cases to clarify the values relevant for that particular individual, and to energise his/her journey towards them. One of the features of the developed 'self-actualiser' individual met in an earlier section was that of 'detachment', ('the self-actualised individual is not en-culturised') which again is a way of coping with/handling a culture not entirely suited to the individual, particularly if that individual has been able to develop understanding to the 'overview' level. (the 'be in it but not of it' type of scenario).

Taking----which road----?

'Following one's own path' may have always been 'the harder road' – the 'road less travelled' as M Scott Peck defines it. Who, for instance, is the microcosm that is the 'tiny' individual, to 'know better' than the huge forces of 'big' in the world : governments, large-scale powerful commercial organisations, powerful media forces, and so on – ? - and to 'go own way' can be a formidable task – a test of inner faith - ? Why do it? Why not just 'go with the flow', as many might undoubtedly do? One answer could lie with the eastern- originated sequence: Mass > Individual > Spiritual which is seen as a progression from 'lower' level living to 'higher level' living, then leading to a 'holistic fulfillment'. In other words, it's seen as a natural sequence of progression, and, for instance, becoming mired in material possessions then becomes a potential pitfall 'along the way'. Again, the 'freerange' notion would suggest that it's an individual choice – some may feel the inner call of such a 'journey' strongly, others may not, suggesting too that individuals operate at different stages/levels (some traditions hold that such a 'journey of the soul' takes in fact many lifetimes i.e. many times that a 'consciousness' is realised in physical form.)

There is, though, a concern about people 'going their own way', which presumably could be valid in the sense that the possibilities, say, for 'getting hold of the wrong end of the stick', would seem to be considerable (although some might argue that 'getting things wrong' is part of the deal and that a good culture would be able to cope with the fact that most might have metaphorical 'L' plates on ---?). The business guru, Charles Handy, defined the true individuality as 'honourable individuality', in which the individual is a 'seeker of truth', and acts with self-discipline to this end. The argument for 'freerange individuality' also rests with the Ruskin type of notion that a nation's best riches are a populace of fuller developed, 'noble' people, 'wised up' rather than 'dumbed down'. Hopefully, the 'freerange' material may have helped in developing the idea that such a state, whilst maybe being as a 'far-off' goal, would be worth working for, and that individual effort, self-discipline, sociability, integrity/self-honesty, spirit of enquiry and motivation would all be key ingredients. In this respect the 'freerange' approach then also would seem to support the notion that life can be a journey, involving probably a degree of 'natural faith', potentially then leading to 'further/higher' less concrete 'realms', which may become then available to those who undertake such a 'journey of the spirit' - ?

Endpiece-----

Sometimes it's interesting to try to gaze over time, over longer periods, using what happened then as a counterpoint to current times, which can at times help perspective. In the UK, for instance, before money came into fashion, lives were lived generally in fairly small, mainly rural-based communities, and 'specialisation' was probably in more limited form – 'A' for instance, was a bootmaker, but also tended some land and animals. 'Trade' was in the form of swapping goods and services via 'bartering', which then facilitated a certain amount of specialisation, although probably not nearly so much as today (is one of today's potential pitfalls that of becoming 'too narrow' - ?). 'B's', though, specialism back along was roofs – thatching – and here's a good illustration of why money was a pretty good invention in terms of providing a 'common medium of exchange'. 'B' would no doubt need the specialist services of 'A' maybe several times a year, but how could he swap a thatched roof, which 'A' might want only once every 20 years or so - ? Once money was there as the common medium of exchange, 'A' would then receive some every time he made or mended a boot, and part of which he could now squirrel away, so that after 20 years or so he could then effectively trade with 'B' and so procure his new roof.

Money is then, in its basic, useful function a 'common medium of exchange', a means rather than an end. The fact that maybe it's become more of an end in more recent times - the 'glint of gold bedazzling the eye' - may mean that some sight of reality has been lost - ? Business, trade, too, could be said to consist of social exchange transactions, 'C' being in business to provide (socially therefore) goods and services of use and value to others such as 'D'. Might the common modern business goal of 'mega bucks making' have obscured some reality, then driving affairs to be too pecuniary, by default then taking attention away from metaphysical considerations such as matters social, soulful, spiritual - ?)

A traditional area of spiritual affairs seem to have been within native peoples living close to nature, and in modern times, there's also examples of the same:

R had had a 'troubled history', having then been in prison a time or two. During his last stretch, he'd met a priest, surprising himself how well he got on with this man, who was of the 'self-enquiry' type rather than being a 'moraliser'. He sparked R's interest, and then helped R to organise the situation R craved on leaving prison – he wanted a solitary spell to reflect and sort himself. He went to stay in a tent on a remote part of a country estate, some supplies being left for him on a weekly basis, the rest of his requirements being supplied by his own skills at hunting – one of his prior activities had been poaching. In the book he eventually wrote about his summer-long solitary sojourn, he said that initially he'd found it quite hard, suddenly being alone in a solitary environment, but that gradually a sort of peace had pervaded him, resulting in him also physically and mentally 'slowing down'. It was at this stage that he started to gain insights into what was meaningful to him, and he eventually emerged 'a much different man', and subsequently going on to be a successful and pithy author.

Maybe such a situation enabled R over time to shed his 'conditioned' skin and 'inner' discover more what was meaningful to him as an individual ? 'Hermiting' is not an activity associated with today's times – quite a luxury for some though, even on a temporary basis as above , and there are places where individuals can undertake 'a retreat'. Maybe, though, it will become a growing trend – one female hermit in the wilds of west Wales, for instance, noticed for

instance, that she was getting an increasing stream of visitors interested in her lifestyle.

The natural lives of native peoples have been well documented, leading to a 'natural wisdom'. The bushmen indigenous tribes of Africa apparently had/ have high reverence for wild animals, and especially so for the 'king of beasts' the lion, their Shamans reputedly developing abilities to communicate with them, and even to be able to physically mix with lions. What would such people have made of modern 'canned' hunting operations in which wild beasts were contained in small enclosures to be then 'trophy' killed by (so-called?) hunters. The bushmen believed that killing in such a way would cause 'loss of soul' – who's to say they were wrong? Pity the pour soul who reportedly 'bravely' shot in such a small enclosure, a suckling lioness, and almost unbearable to relate, in front of her cubs.

Native Americans, for instance, are said to have has deep respect for animals, including their prey, bison, which they only slaughtered to their needs, whereas white hunters are said to have killed indiscriminately. They seem to have been 'freeranger' pioneers :

'All birds, even those of the same species, are not alike, and it is the same with animals, and with human beings. The reason Watantanka does not make two birds, or animals, or human beings exactly alike is because each is placed here by Watantanka to be an independent individuality, and to rely upon itself.' Sioux Chief

Precious words from a 'master freeranger' - ?

And as Linda Tucker comments, in her book, Mystery of White Lions (Hay House):

' (the)--- route to spiritual evolution is clear ----- we all have our own unique journey to walk----'. Until we re-align ourselves with the forces of light, of sunlight, of light energy which breathes life into each and every life form on this planet, we are aligning ourselves with darkness.'

Crikey - a wee bit to think about---?

Good 'freerangin'.

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