

Freerangin' on -----

'Real-Self' Realisation – A Route Towards Authentic Fulfilment ----- ? Mike Robin

Becoming the 'Real Self' - Explorations incorporating 'expanded awareness' aspects relating to personal fulfilment ----

'Happiness – a shorter term positive experience. Fulfilment – a longer-term positive experience'

(Eastern mystic)

Pre-amble

'It's amazing how little we enquire into the meaning of our own lives' ---- (Jurg Rohrer, writer)

Maybe though, the 'fast flow' mega mainstream 'big' culture' can inhibit - ? Has maybe modern man been 'conned' out of her/his rightful strength, as some writers (see later) feel, then tending to inhibit anything other than a 'superficial' take on life - ?

'We used to build civilisations; now we build shopping centres' Bill Bryson, author

The 'life journey' which proceeds without being too 'barrier-ed' can lead it's said to an expanded awareness of the individual, to the individual 'coming home', being 'unified', finding their 'real selves', along with 'by-product' benefits such as energy, health, joy, compassion and understanding. Those – maybe relatively few? - who've experienced such a 'complete' state tend to confirm the positivity of it, that it exists, that it's experienced via 'real self' experience, and it's 'just waiting to be arrived at' -----

With everything that goes on these days, there's maybe then quite a bit of potential 'barrier-ing' for a person to fully be their 'real self' - ? Imagine just how many influences these days battle to get the mind's attention and preoccupation, what with papers, TV programmes, TV and paper adverts, social media, urban 'mass' living, and the like, along with a relatively strong general 'mass' culture – and this is before wider influences such as 'globalisation' - and the amount of time people are absorbed by/in them.

By comparison, imagine someone living, say around a couple of hundred years ago, say here in the UK, would have led a pastoral sort of a life, living in a small rural community, no papers, couldn't read anyway, no TV, no phones or social media, everyone having a place in society and knowing it, everyone in the small and 'relatable to' community with 'room' to be an individual – even their names indicated such : 'Samuel Smallpiece', 'Grayson Gotobed', and so on---- True they probably had to touch their forelocks to the Squire and the Vicar, but then generally didn't have too much to do with them, getting on leading their unique and individual style of niche life in the village. Quite a bit different compared with the pace, noise and myriad influences of modern life -----

Or, say, life as a Native American, on the plains, chasing some supper, but being geared into 'living with nature', and with 'the Great Spirit', only harvesting to their needs level. Time left too to 'commune with nature' in their tepees ----

'The man who sat on the ground in his tepee meditating on life and its meaning, accepting the kinship of all creatures, and acknowledging unity with the universe, was infusing into his being the true essence of civilisation. And when man left off this form of development, his humanisation was retarded in growth.'

(Chief Luther Standing Bear)

All somewhat different to living a 'culturally mainstream' life in modern times ----

Different travel -----

One 'alternative' idea to 'generalised' modern materialistic life is that life can be used as an individual journey, particularly of self-discovery, the natural conclusion of which, if unhindered, can be the process of the individual shedding extraneous 'external' conditionings to then finding/developing the 'real' or 'true' self, then 'transcending' 'ordinary' life as we know it', to then access 'higher' level energies, awareness and their benefits. Not everyone buys into such a scenario, and there are also probably quite a few that might suggest that modern 'western style' cultures are 'stuck' at a low energy level, being too much 'mired in materialism'. For those though who might feel they have natural needs to explore their existential-ness, or, say, maybe have a need for new/different operating systems, the idea of 'life as a development journey' has obvious attractions.

Some might like to see it as a level, horizontal-style journey which might suit their own style. Others may choose to see it as an 'inner mountain climb', which too has certain attractions which again might suit some. This piece is geared to the 'horizontal journey' outlook, and a following piece on the FR website books page, on the lines of *'Making the Inner Mountain Climb'* will be geared more to the more vertical approach----

'Yer pays yer money -and teks yer choice --- '

The 'life as discovery' route has supporters of some renown :

'A life unexamined --- is not worth living --- ' (Socrates)

' To be what we are, and to become what we are capable of becoming, is the only end in life'

(Robert Louis Stevenson, *writer*)

' Seek your own light ', said that well-known 'freeranger', Buddha

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

(Linda Tucker, *Mystery of the White Lions*)

Fore word(s)

It maybe a particularly apt and timely period in Earth life in which a 'taking stock' exercise is needed, given there's considerable modern evidence that the planet's health is fast deteriorating, for which man as the 'top dog' living entity presumably has to take at least some responsibility, if not quite a bit, with a change needed given the over prolific use of resources that has and is occurring. A report in the UK broadsheet paper today for instance questions why domestic cars are getting bigger and heavier -----

'Be the change you want to see' said Gandhi, and recent public demonstrations by the young of the world might indicate that's a relevant direction -- 'Awareness' could seem to be key with modern techniques such as 'mindfulness practice' holding the promise to expand individual awareness levels, then translated into expanded wider culture awareness levels - ?

Maybe it 's right – the road to individual salvation and fulfilment is also the way to the Earth's and man's salvation and fulfilment – it could seem possible ---- firstly though to get past the narrow 'denial-type' outlooks of over 'out-for-small self' fixed positions, a move which can happen when people become, as individuals, more mindful and more aware, then able to operate less in 'small self' mode, and more in in their 'expanded' selves ----

Not everyone of course is necessarily in a position to 'invest in self' and take the self-fulfilment journey, and not everyone may want to, and of course for many it can be a 'natural happening'.

It's could be likely for instance that many undertake such a ' natural development' journey as they progress through life and gain experience --- ? Maybe the modern trend towards 'youngist' outlooks could have somewhat obscured such trends --- ?

For those that seek to operate beyond 'small self' limits, some 'counter' content may be useful to help cope with the considerable 'fast flow' of modern cultural mainstreams -- to then be able to 'anchor' themselves (i.e. against the flow) and their being in the cause of self-discovery. This piece, then, is hopefully a contribution to the 'wider vision, bigger self' end, and to identify an 'anchoring' process, involving increased awareness, and to help and support those folk who are, with a 'main man's' support (Buddha -see later), 'travelling the way'/ wanting to 'travel the way' -----

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Explorations -----

Exploring 'personal fulfilment' -----

Such a topic area isn't maybe likely to be an everyday preoccupation for most, or even for many, for a variety of reasons (see below) and especially maybe in modern 'money mired' times? Bill Bryson, the well-known American writer gives a wry relevant quote :

'We used to build civilisations; now we build shopping malls'

There is reason though to speculate that 'being development' may be a more prominent feature in the future, given more 'mass' access these days to a huge information system that is the internet (in most countries) and then techniques such as, say, mindfulness practice, which can have the effect of raising

and expanding a 'wider awareness' in individuals, escaping the limiting controlling power of the mind, sometimes called 'the tyranny of the mind' (*again, see later in this piece*).

The fact that there could well be a state of being which can and does transcend so-called 'normal life' conditions, concerns and pressures, which most likely involves a process which can develop the 'aware self' beyond the mind, hence naturally limiting mind control, but which can't be verified by traditional research, in the sense that it is a 'direct experience' experience at the individual level, can be of interest to some ----

(and therefore such 'direct experience' could also be a key reason why the individual whilst being in power terms, miniscule small, is yet important, key even to future survival ----- ?)

Those who've had the 'direct experience' of the full ('real self') 'expanded awareness' state tend to report that it is a highly beneficial state, with issues previously seen as problems now 'dissolving', copious energy pouring through, outrageous healthy well being, joy, bliss, compassion and 'oneness' - being 'at one' with creation, with the universe, a position of the individual being 'fully validated', fully 'in the flow' and 'at home' - the 'max security' position as some would see it. And it's at this level that the fuller fulfilment is experienced --- Sounds too good to be true - ? Yes ----- but, to the 'smaller mind' --- ----?

Exploring 'personal potential' -----

The above paragraphs can relate to what's known as 'self-realisation' - the emergence of a person's 'true self', undaunted and unsullied then by any 'over' influences extraneous to the individual - in a sense a 'pure, pristine state of being' - and given the copious amount of 'extraneous influences' in a modern world, it's perhaps not too hard to see that such a state might not be too easy to come by, meeting some difficulties in terms of then dealing with the 'world as is currently known'. (*again, see later ---*).

There is too the phenomenon of 'self actualisation' - becoming one's 'maximum persona', achieving full potential, as first outlined by the American psychologist Abraham Maslow, who put it as the highest level of human needs in his well-known 'hierarchy of human needs', still considered relevant in spite of its 'age'.

When researching the same amongst 'mentally healthy' people, Maslow was apparently taken aback by the number of them who related experiences of intense and profound joy, well-being and fulfilment, which he then described as 'peak experiences'. Maybe then, these jolts of 'peak experience', were 'glimpses' of the transcend state of self-realisation, a state which humankind may be now approaching with a level of awareness amongst some now more appropriate to fuller realisation of such longer-term 'realised' states - ? And could it be that such a 'wising up' state might be a better target over the longer-term than, say, any 'dumbing down' condition - often, it's said, induced by over materialism - ? Cultural influences generally could be said to potentially often be a 'heavy blanket' below which people can struggle - ?

-----just look at the extent and power and influence of the modern media ---- as one commentator recently said 'the weight of media information could be in danger of overwhelming 'common sense' --- '

(---the author travelled his own 'inner mountain climb' journey prompted by personal life crisis and with considerable mentoring help ---)

And - 'home ---- sweet home ----- ?'

Maybe, then, these higher, 'transcend' type states indicate a 'coming home' phase for man, so often predicted in various writings of the past – man being of 'freewill', wandering 'lonely as a cloud' but maybe necessarily with a need to 'find their own way home' - ? Some scientifically-minded writers though can be pretty scathing on the general subject of religion, seeing it as a 'mass conditioning of man'. It would be perhaps difficult to refute that religion can have acted as a 'mass conditioner', but is it then necessary to see and to experience via personal awareness and/or spirituality beyond that particular mindset/mental restriction - ?

Have the 'naysayers', for instance, tended to 'throw the baby out with the bathwater?' Maybe, for instance, their own fixed position on this matter in itself limits them from 'seeing further' - ? One of the difficulties may be of the 'oil and water' variety – man's 'normal' consciousness and authentic personal 'expanded consciousness' don't mix, just as generalised presumptions and peoples' own personal spiritual experience aren't of the same nature. John Anthony West (American writer) put it succinctly :

' ---- the problem with the scientifically-minded --- what they call 'reason' and 'right-thinking', isn't rational at all, it's 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 negative credulity, not science. '

The scientific community as a whole though isn't these days quite so 'black and white' and has become more aware of the limitations of having 'automatically' to have 'mass' type 'statistically valid' quantitative-type verification, which can tend then by default to limit validity in individual 'qualitative-type' experience. To understand and 'know' the existence of any 'expanded awareness' state, they themselves would likely have to experience it, have the 'direct experience' -----

Some, for example Buddha himself, have indicated that the real purpose of life is to travel 'the way', (i.e. to 'self realisation') and stresses that the individual needs to travel their own path, (and has the right to do so), the path which then can lead to 'real self' and to fulfilment, in the sense that it's suggested that it's only as their real self that an individual can then find 'true' fulfilment, which in turn can lead to 'at home' personal spirituality experience .

(it's recognised that not all individuals are necessarily at a stage of 'finding a way home', which may anyway be an 'advanced' 'down the track' position - ?).

(it's maybe important here to indicate that personal spirituality may well not necessarily automatically equate with religion – it's been stated for instance that people who develop strong connections to, say, nature, can be experiencing at a 'spiritual' level).

'Work out your own salvation. Don't rely on others.' (Buddha)

Such a sentiment from Buddha might not sit over well with modernist mainstreamers for whom wealth and power would seem often to be the main goals ---- ? And as John Anthony West points to above, individuals who haven't experienced 'beyond the small self' might not then have the means by which to access/ assess any 'expanded awareness' states - ?

Some Zen writings suggest for instance that spirituality, reverence and 'holiness' is not 'up there' but rather is 'down here, and 'all about'; and that the 'divine' is a potentiality in man, particularly then relevant to the idea of 'transcended, self-realised man'. The various levels could then appear to be :

Mass >>>> Individual >>>> Real self/personal spirituality/divine

In practical terms, it could be said that the less experienced need the 'safety of the herd' and to 'fit in', hence the 'mass' level. As the individual then proceeds through life their own experience and strength build, to the point of being able to make considered, quality independent decisions, and inhabit the 'adult' mode of operation, the 'individual' level, (see also *Transactional Analysis* analysis), which brings them towards the 'real self' position, which in turn might induce them to embark on the fuller 'real self' journey.

(there's a tradition in India for instance, where older males give up materialistic interests and re-focus on 'higher' consciousness' levels ----)

(some 'mental spring cleaning' could for instance still be needed in modern times - ?. With aspects such as the complexities and speed of modern living, and the 'noise' it creates, any 'later' existential 'transcendent-type' stage might though struggle to develop without some 'personal spring cleaning' - ? (again - see later)).

Such a journey could though also be considered at a relatively early age, though care would maybe need to be taken that it was in reality an appropriate move for that particular situation; the generous 'goodies package' said to accompany transcended 'real selfhood' is such that it could for instance act as a strong inducement for a premature move, especially if it becomes a 'mind's eye want', the 'mind in control' position being potentially susceptible to 'goodies wanting' - ---? (Buddha's warnings re 'desire' - i.e desire via mindsets being a potential barrier to any 'expanded awareness' level - ?)

It may also be useful to note that that any such 'expanded awareness' position could likely involve the individual going beyond the self in 'ego' and 'mind' terms, as some of the aspects of 'real self, transcended man' suggest, man for instance becoming 'healed and whole', becoming unified with universal law and energy ('Tao'), and with an authentic attitude of 'willing subservience' to it. Eckhart Tolle, the well-known 'new age' writer, suggests for instance that an 'expanded awareness' process involves the individual's mind, often the 'controller' of the individual, becoming, with the onset of greater awareness in the individual, then the 'servant' of the individual, rather than the controller ---- .

(hence the importance of modern self-work techniques such as mindfulness practice which can aid such a process (see later)).

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A note - 'simple --- and yet complex' ----- '

Writing simply about such life trends and seemingly 'high flown' transcend 'expanded awareness' states can maybe end up on the trite side; in actuality things aren't necessarily so straight forward; there are no doubt difficulties and barriers a-plenty in complex 'life as is currently known' -----

'Listen to your own voice, your own soul. Too many people listen to the noise of the world, instead of themselves' (Leon Brown)

One potential limitation could be that because there's a considerable array of 'goodies' associated with the 'real self, fully formed' position, there could be too as above, a danger of 'over focus' on results, on the 'positive' side of the equation, creating an 'over mind desire' situation, which in itself could then act as a barrier.

(a 'mind' practice that may be relatively common, a variation on the 'wanting to run before walking' theme - ? The 'real self' journey might well though have to start from the 'walking' standpoint, dealing with, and learning from the maybe negative-perceived situation then enabling travelling into more positive spheres ---- i.e. not quite the scenario the mind might 'have in mind --- ').

Facing and accepting perceived 'negative energy' situations may involve some difficulty for some, (look how, for instance, how difficult the subject of 'depression' has sometimes been ?) The psychologist Jung, for instance, was of the opinion that prospect of having to face and deal with negative energy aspects (eg. depression, unconfidence, low self-esteem, indecision, 'rushing' syndrome etc)) would not be popular and would then restrict interest in any 'self-development journey'.

It may be too that mainstream culture 'perfection' expectations of people have in themselves been counter-productive, putting undue pressure on individuals to follow goals not necessarily in tune with their own 'being', and to be 'positively culturally perfect' - in effect in itself potentially promoting 'running before walking' trends -----

Others, of course, may well though be 'natural travellers' -----

Fortunately these days there are techniques (such as mindfulness practice) which both help people to become more self-tolerant , self-accepting and self-nurturing, as well as helping folk to come to terms with negatively-perceived situations. Mainstream expectations may be too to some extent at least, becoming a bit less demanding – the 'negative energy' condition of depression for instance not too long ago here in the UK was quite a social 'no no', (and to some extent may still be so?), whereas currently it has become more of an 'acceptable' condition, no doubt helped by prominent champions such as the UK's Prince William :

'It's ok to be not ok'

If a person is stuck in an unproductive, unfulfilling life with little or no room for escape, as they perceive it, why wouldn't for instance a 'negative energy' state i.e. depression, be a normal and natural outcome - ?

Facing negativity, negative energy (eg.s an undesirable character trait, a life position perceived as 'undesirable') is something though that can also get easier with practice (and in private) --- and in the knowledge that no-one should be expected to be 'instantly perfect' --- (and probably, no-one is ---), freedom from 'self perfection expectation' could be one of the great freedoms ---- see 'mindfulness' practice later.

It's currently reported that adult females in the UK 'beat them selves up' on average eight times a day, potentially/probably indicating considerable past cultural 'perfection pressure' - ? (or maybe 'social de-status' pressure, i.e. as females - ?) Being able though to face and accept 'life as it is' (rather than living the 'life as we wish to see it', is more realistic, and importantly, can then open the door to 'real self' experience and 'bigger realities' ----)

Overview ---- 'towards the real self and fulfilment '-----

It's not necessarily a bad idea to have a relatively straightforward 'theoretical' outline of the process under review, an 'overview', if only to be able to go back to it to 'refresh the picture' after complexities (and noise ---) may have 'muddied the waters', 'clouded the picture', temporarily maybe impeding

progress, as can sometimes be the case. And of course it's useful to try to see potential difficulties, with the aim of avoiding, circumnavigating and/or countering them in the cause of 'onward journeying' towards 'real selfhood' - 'forewarned being forearmed' --- 'The overview focuses on the 'bigger picture', useful to link to at times whilst 'on the way', and especially if the picture has gone a little fuzzy ---

'Overviews' can then be useful to create a 'bigger picture', so the following question by question section might be helpful in this respect :

General aim : To progress the development of self via authentic self-acceptance and increasing awareness towards real-self fulfillment.

Question :

'How come then a person isn't their true, full self-?'

*'Not necessarily so' ----- as the Zen Master said ---- So what can get in the way of 'true self' reality? There could well be 'old tapes' running for instance within the set of mindsets that are operational, but which in reality may not represent the reality of 'today'. Someone, for instance, might have a fear of the dark originated in childhood and still operational, even though that individual now adult could be capable of operating at lower fear levels (*one of the most common and 'unhelpful' historical mind tapes could be of the 'beating the self up' variety -----*).*

As well as such historical 'conditioning' influences potentially distorting any current reality, there could of course well be present conditioning influences at work – a useful example could be cultural approaches to mental illness, for instance not long ago (in the UK) mental-sickness was something of a taboo, 'no-no' subject, whereas these days with the change in general attitudes, it's becoming more of an 'ok' area to discuss/accept.

Then there's cultural peer pressures, apparently quite strong for younger generations here in the UK, reportedly magnified by the high screen use of modern times, which also may be a factor in what's been reported as high levels of 'politically correct' thinking, 'group think' even. University student groups, from those centres of 'freethinking', have been held to account for seemingly being keen to thwart speakers espousing differing lines of thought from their 'mainstream' - 'non platforming' them - a not too encouraging environment for developing 'full and rounded' 'freerange' type of individual thinking - ?

A saying from former times was 'opposition is friendship', presumably opening up the possibility of 'the more open mind' - ? (and a key condition of real debate - ?)

Has there also been any period too for instance with greater pressure on the individual from media sources – just look at the sheer number of adverts on TV and the overall level of commercialism in society, with the 'maximisation of profits' objective often seemingly leading to 'on the make' commercial practice, the miniscule small powerless individual then often becoming the 'prey' of large predator firms - ?

One farm in the west country of the UK did not have the 'maximising profits' objective, rather their focus was on 'care for animals' and 'rural lifestyle'. Whilst the farm wouldn't have made the top profit echelons, in terms of animal and environmental care, it would have been in the premier league. Their 'profit objective', not of the maximisation type, was of the 'sufficiency' nature - it was important that their farm business made a certain needed level of profit to on-going-ly facilitate their farm practices and lifestyle.

Such a stance can be the essence of 'lifestyle enterprises', indicating that despite modern heavy focus on 'profit maximisation', such a goal is not relevant to every situation ---- Remembering the Zen Master's pithy comment : '---- not necessarily so ---- '

(research by this author revealed that such a 'profit sufficiency' goal stance was not uncommon amongst UK farmers, and that a considerable diversity of objectives was relevant to them, in all sixteen in fact differing types of business objectives were important to them, with 'profit sufficiency' having a higher rating than 'profit maximisation'. The 'family' farm business was/is then more of a 'lifestyle enterprise', as many smaller businesses no doubt are, but not necessarily overly recognised in 'big is best' business culture - ? Priorities are dynamic and can change and managing such complexity by ,say, identifying appropriate current objective priorities for the business, was then an important management task and skill.)

There are undoubtedly many 'lifestyle', probably smaller, enterprises/businesses operating via a multi-objective style (as opposed to the single-dimensioned 'maximising profit' style), but which tend to go 'unsung', not being in the mainstream mode of 'big business' - ?

Has there too been any period previously when the small and powerless individual has had to deal with so many large organisations, including governments, many inclined to operate on a 'big is best' power pattern resulting often in less than ideal treatment, particularly in terms of respect, of individuals as customers -? Various commentators have suggested that the individual has lost essential personal inner strength due to such proliferation of large organisations, often displaying 'big is best', 'might is right' type cultures – i.e the individual has become 'less empowered'.

This all adds up to a considerable potential array and weight of factors which could inhibit individuals 'inhabiting their own ('real') skins' - ----

How then can the individual even survive in such a seemingly unequal life situation might be a relevant question – maybe individuals should be given medals for 'valient struggles in the face of unequal odds' ----- ? As above, there would seem to be many and diverse pressures potentially moulding people away from their 'real selves', and as many authors (Schumacher, Fromm, Levine, Orwell, Huxley, Foley, Pirsig et al -see bibliography) have previously suggested. This then leads directly to the next important question :

Question :

'Why could gaining access to 'real self' be important - ?

It's probably really not that important to the commercial world, for instance, which often seemingly prefers individuals to join the materialist system of avid consumption (and historically seemingly often regardless of any ill effects such as environment degradation) – better for firms' profits ? Such a commercialised approach to life has been criticised in terms of producing 'limited dimensioned' people, the so-called 'dumbing down' syndrome (this could be why it's probably more ideal for governments to take a 'bigger picture' approach and then produce a multi-dimensioned society ----?)

' --- stay asleep ----- stay asleep ---- says corporate culture, we can deal with you better that way '

Edward Norton, actor and film maker

The commercial 'narrow' approach and the at times non-priority to individual progress might mean that it can pay the individual then to be somewhat wary of a substantial portion of society, and lean towards working out values and priorities which are meaningful to themselves, as many, particularly with experience, undoubtedly do, a cause to which the 'freeranger' material is in support --- and part of the fuller self-realisation process -----

The above paragraph in itself presents a strong reason why it can be important for the 'seeking, freerange' type of individual to get in touch with their 'real selves' - how else are they to find out fully what their own values and priorities are - ? Buddha's exhortations (above) that people need to work out their own salvation and not to rely on others, springs to mind again -----.

A 'further-down the track' argument presented by some is that the 'real self finding' route is also the longer-term sustainable way to real fulfilment, real security and real well-being (rather than, say, amassing wealth), and also potentially to expanded awareness and consciousness, which can be part of a 'liberation' process (eg. escaping 'the tyranny of the mind'), meaningful for some ----

Question :

'Why is reality important? What's the problem with 'being away from reality' - ?

Yes, interesting question, and presumably there are times when 'reality' might be proving, say, a little too tough, so 'escape from reality' might well be a survival tactic - ? (eg. a person has had a 'blow' in life and needs time to 'curl up and recover'), and it's noticeable that current times can sometimes give scant regard to reality - 'fake news' and the like, with cultural emphasis on individuals 'wanting things own way'.

The other side of the coin is that 'getting with reality' and 'getting real' can be instrumental in a person's ultimate ability to connect with 'ultimate reality' - 'Tao', universal energy, consciousness beyond 'small self', a state that it's said can offer real benefits such as real security, full validity, well-being and 'care' (for self and others). Such a 'finding real self' journey may not necessarily be everyone's cup of tea but for people (such as free-rangers?) who are interested in exploring the various facets of life, furthering 'life understanding' and 'pushing the personal development boundaries', it may be pivotal stuff (and many "unsung" individuals no doubt 'travel the way' -----), and too for people who may seek/need 'an alternative operating system'.

All those influences and pressures mentioned above of course are likely to be evident, so 'cutting to the quick' of life can be a tortuous process, and any 'de-conditioning' process may take some time --- and may meet its own obstacles (eg. opinions and attitudes of others). A basic argument can be that if a person is not aligned with their own ('small') reality, then it's unlikely they'd be able to then connect to any larger reality, such as, say, 'Tao' (natural universal energy sources) - the way to experiencing any 'larger realities', expanded awareness/consciousness, is opened up by the ability of the individual to connect with 'smaller self reality' -----

(those that do undertake 'Buddha's journey' to 'salvation' (and fulfilment?) may often find there's a need to create 'own time and space', especially in the latter stages, to complete it --)

'You get to the stage of needing your own green retreat' (Bette Midler, actor)

'It maybe that in this day and age such is the focus and emphasis on 'flash' reality (lots of money, big houses, celebrity, flash motors etc. etc.) , the ability to connect with a more 'ordinary reality' is made harder ----'

Spiritual mentor (on net)

'The enlightened person is the de-conditioned self'

(Jed Mckenna, enlightenment guide))

What though, about Chief Luther's 'infusions of the being' - ? Maybe the 'de-conditioning' element is only part of the job - ?' Another angle is that the individual 'empties' - i.e from conditioned mindsets - to then be able to receive 'universal insights/truths' to 're-build' in the 'purer' existential mode ----

In terms of 'de-conditioning', it's fortunate that there are user-friendly practices these days such as 'mindfulness' practice which can help the individual sort the 'mental wheat from the chaff', at a pace which is tailored to the individual, and as Eckhart Tolle suggests below, helping the individual escape 'the tyranny of the mind', to then have mental power available to serve the individual, rather than be her/his keeper.

'Awakening is a shift in consciousness in which thinking and awareness separate ---- instead of being lost in your thinking, when you are awake you recognise yourself as the awareness behind it. Thinking then ceases to be a self-serving autonomous activity that takes possession of you and runs your life. Awareness takes over from thinking. Instead of being in charge of your life, thinking becomes the servant of awareness.'

(Eckhart Tolle : *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*)

Another relatively simple reason why it might pay to operate 'in reality mode' is simply that then, more is likely to go right, less likely to go wrong. If a person interprets events too much through their own constructed 'internal prism', then there's more chance of their interpretation becoming 'askew', i.e. being less aligned with the external reality of the situation, then potentially creating problems rather than solving them ---- (and there could be risk implications if 'real reality' is not recognised ---)

Again and as above, a longer-term constructive reason to 'get real' is to do with the ability of the individual to 'fuller develop'. The thinking is that by working to 'face and accept' current personal reality - mindfulness practice (see later) for instance urges people to do just that by selecting an 'undesirable/unproductive' trait they have - 'facing imperfection' (and which it's said most if not all have ---), and then doing the mindfulness work over time to 'change the record', then produces a more productive development phase, and at the same time both gaining internal 'real self' strength and authentic self-nurturing skills.

A common trait - supported by mainstream culture (?) - is said to be trying to 'escape' current reality - wanting to be 'something else', to be 'elsewhere', wanting 'evermore', - a 'wanting' habit which modern culture can often appear to support and even champion, in the form, say, of promoting 'flash', luxurious living. Might this, though, be the 'wanting' which Buddha warned about, in that 'mind wanting' (i.e. part of the mind being in control ---) itself can be an impediment to progress - ?

Mindfulness work in itself is not necessarily unduly difficult: the 'negative' situations are then 'faced and accepted', and 'dealt with', rather than the 'escape/avoid button pressed - mainstream culture hasn't necessarily always been too open and supporting in terms of 'facing reality', particularly if

negative energy is present - the negatively-perceived condition of 'depression', for instance, is only relatively recently becoming 'acceptable' - --.

A U.N advisor carried out in the last couple of years, an audit on UK society, resulting in several criticisms of it, including that having so many of the populace within the 'poor' category (and often having to rely for instance on food banks for subsistence) wasn't consistent with a 'good society' profile. There was quite a heavy anti reaction to such criticism from UK authorities, who appeared to be in denial of such (valid - ?) criticisms, not seemingly able or willing to take on board 'negative' situations ----

Question :

'Bigger selves', 'expanded awareness', wider consciousness', 'enlightenment' even – it all sounds pretty esoteric, spooky maybe even to some - ? Is all this really 'real and relevant' to 'ordinary' people - ?

Relevant question again, and yes, it can all sound a bit remote from everyday life as we know it. It's still probably true that undertaking such a 'work-on-self' journey is not for all – it's said for instance that often a prompt such as, say, their own 'operating system' not performing too well, is needed to motivate an individual to take up such work-on-self - others of course though maybe natural 'life explorers' interested in progressing their own life journey. Eckhart Tolle suggests that a 'grace' event (i.e. from 'outside' the individual) at individual level is needed to 'set the ball rolling'. Maybe being here, for instance, and reading these words could qualify ---- ?

People who have strong vested interests or, say, who feel very settled and established in life might presumably not sign up to such work programmes, as maybe people who are very 'mainstream' culture and/or tied into to belief system organisations (eg. religions) may not want to venture out of their known territories ----. And in a 'freeworld' culture, it's probably also key to recognise that it's the individual's call - it's up to them how they structure and lead their lives, presumably within socially acceptable parameters.

Question :

'But isn't 'work on self' a bit too nerve racking and 'unpleasant' - ?

Anything to do with 'trick cyclists' ('psychiatrists') can probably have a wee bit of 'angst' associated with it, partly, though, maybe due to the traditional practices of 'digging deep' to uncover deep Freudian-type causes to explain current problems - ? Other mentors, though, differentiate by highlighting and treating conditions that are essentially a result of , say, prolonged stress that can then tend to proliferate at ever faster rates. Carl Jung, a renowned figure in the psychology field felt that any 'enlightened' condition came about as a result of 'lightening the dark', the implication of which meant that the individual then experienced 'darkness', which Jung felt would not be a particularly popular option, again, mainstream cultures may have had at times an inhibitory effect - ?

Again, this relates to aversion to 'negative' situations, as above. It's no doubt true that 'negative energy' situations have not been over acceptable in the past, from the individual's point of view but then 'amplified' by mainstream culture messages. Fortunately, though, times are such that the existence of negative energy conditions is now more readily accepted, with depressive conditions being an obvious example, and such recognition in itself removes a considerable level of 'non-acceptance' pressure.

As before ----

It's ok to be not ok' Prince William (UK)

It is probably the case that there have been quite a few who have struggled with various levels of 'mental difficulties'/angst/stress then resulting coming through their particular brand of 'darkness' to then experience 'living in the light', prompted no doubt by their need to find a better 'operating system', and helped to face up to their predicaments by mentors/mentoring books . It's now interesting to consider whether there's, in the form of 'mindfulness practice', (see later), an amenable, user-friendly , self-nurturing and positive method of undertaking 'self-work' to then expand awareness and espouse more reality, potentially then leading to 'expanded awareness' states, which then might become less the 'far off goal' that's it's tended to be in the past - ? They might even become to be accepted as a natural development in peoples' lives, - ?

Mindfulness work has various built-in advantages : it can be started at a modest level, taking, say, an irritating but small trait such as say, 'indecisiveness', or 'impatience', working with that which then can gradually expand into wider awareness, with the individual increasing their ability to be able to better accept 'imperfection' and to 'see' how they're operating, and particularly how their mind is operating in set, fixed modes, and then to change responses if required. Such 'imperfection acceptance' in itself promotes a more self considerate and compassionate approach. The work can be self-regulated, done in private and done at the individual's own pace, so from a 'working' point of view, it has a lot of advantages.

It may well be that 'perfection messages' from mainstream culture have impacted on many - if not most? - individuals, to some extent producing, as in the case of the self beating-up females, 'i'm not worthy' mindsets- ?

Mentoring, if required/wanted, can easily be facilitated – there are many useful written guides to the practice, (*see bibliography*), there are mindfulness groups and there's individual mentoring available, should it be needed. Access to a source of knowledgeable support can add a productive arm to the process but is probably not necessarily a 'must' component. Modern support tends to usefully focus on 'positive development' support, rather than 'over' traditional 'digging' in negative energy fields.

(n.b. anyone experiencing agitation might well be advised to initially get de-stressing help)

Question :

Ok, so what exactly could be the benefits of taking the 'work-on-self' expanded awareness route - ?

The argument, as above, is that in modern complex and complicated life, there are many potential barriers and obstacles to the fuller development of the individual, from historic mental conditioning, to 'micro managing' governments, to 'largist power organisation' modern life, to the torrent of modern life media, to the type and style of modern materialistically-orientated cultures, to modern 'big is best' mindsets and so forth. The chances therefore of the (freerange) individual getting 'waylaid' on their personal development journey may then be considerable, so making any positive move such as undertaking say mindfulness practice to both counter such over influences and then build self-strength and a positive 'real self', is likely a real aid, and may well needed, if useful progress is to be made, and can act as an effective 'counter' to those 'heavy' extraneous factors ----

There's quite a bit on the net about countering modern complexity by for instance, 'living simply', as do no doubt quite a few do, finding the process useful in terms of both countering modern 'complexities' and 'mind clutter' --- (in itself a type of 'counter' lifestyle ---)

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

(Lao Tsu)

One potential benefit of such self-work is greater awareness– for the individual – that a) they've been operating on laid down tapes, to some extent at least, and that b) these can be changed/over-ridden – the first glimmer of potential release from 'the tyranny of the mind' and to more personal freedom. The mindfulness process of 'watching' mindsets/traits without judging, i.e. accepting 'imperfection', a 'counter' mind move in itself, can lead then the individual to be more tolerant of themselves, more 'allowing', then encouraging a self-nurturing approach, often maybe the opposite mindset than before. The whole process leads to cultivating awareness and understanding, as realisations come as to, say, how behaviour has been formed in the past.

Such self-nurturing, besides being a potentially 'de-stressing' move, then fosters a more positive 'can do' type of approach, and because the 'set mind' is in essence being challenged by the process (and ultimately deposed as the 'controller-in-chief'), this at the same time beginning a process of building 'real self-strength', which has obvious longer-term benefits for the individual, even to the point of delivering a 'full-on' real self persona, then to potentially experience a raft of 'expanded awareness' benefits (see later).

The initial awareness prompt can then develop further and fuller into on-going building wider general awareness, which can assist the individual in the businesses of self management, and managing life in general. Depending on the type of traits that are 'dealt with' within the mindfulness work, associated benefits can be harvested. If, say, a (possibly common) trait of 'hurry, hurry-ness' is tackled -the individual on a treadmill of always 'hunting on' to the next situation/issue – it's quite possible for instance that there could be a benefit to health, for instance, in terms of lower stress levels.

There are then considerable day-to-day benefits available for the individual. For those who find themselves wanting to 'journey further' and explore continued effects and benefits, there's then the possibility of what's termed an 'awakening', the individual moving to a fuller level of consciousness and often involving a 'spiritual' aspect (personal rather than 'organisational').

Various writers in the field of spiritual development have asserted that human beings are essentially spiritual beings (i.e. at a personal level) currently experiencing the human state, rather than human state beings then getting to experience spirituality. There is also the idea that human 'expanded awareness' states, although commonly seen as 'rarified territory', are in fact normal states in terms of the fuller development of humans, and that, as above, there are though plenty of impediments to this fuller development stage being reached.

Question :

Seems to be 'too good to be true', but a bit 'apart' from normal life - ?

Yes, such 'expanded awareness' states can seem quite a way off, and a bit 'way out' viewed from 'life as is known'. But then again, as above, there's quite a bit 'weighing down' on people with all the complexities and pressures of modern life, so it's maybe not too surprising that there's quite a distance between the two. And of course, not everyone is able to 'simplify' and self de-clutter to access any 'real self' find route. Nevertheless, for those that can gain such an opportunity, and 'mindfulness practice', for instance can help considerably in facilitating 'self-work', there remains the possibility that they could over time access expanded awareness states and the benefits associated with them.

There is the idea that ultimately it's the destination of all individuals, i.e to find their 'real selves' and to then reach full validity and fulfilment. There's also the notion that there could be more individuals experiencing the 'fuller fulfilment' level than maybe commonly thought (*and as such, being 'complete', 'settled and sorted', have no need then to 'make a song and dance' about it - ?*)

Question :

'Buddha talks about 'salvation' - how does that fit in - ?

'Work out your own salvation, do not rely on others' Buddha

It's likely that Buddha is here maybe using the word as a general term, implying the individual gaining their own real-self full potential, gaining fulfilment, and that he's exhorting people to do this as he himself walked his way and found his 'enlightenment'. He is in effect a 'freeranger' supporter, saying that 'it's the individual's call' which is an important endorsement in the modern 'large organisation' organised world, in which the individual is 'power poor', and for those who sense that salvation is indeed found by those 'who walk their own path'. The 'expanded awareness' state is then a state of being available to humans and at least some would suggest that it's a 'normal and natural' state, albeit having been fairly 'hidden' in modern materialistical-style cultures.

(n.b this work aims to try to help and support those that wish to make their own journey)

Question :

' It may all sounds good, but surely it's not that easy, and there are pitfalls - ?'

Yes of course, the course of 'true enlightenment' doesn't necessarily always run smoothly.

The mind, for instance, is often a 'wanting' instrument', and with enlightenment states seemingly offering an array of 'goodies', it can perhaps easily be a 'mind target'. But just by looking up what's involved and following that (eg.s 'I must do good, I must be compassionate') is probably not likely to 'cut the mustard' - rather the individual needs to take the self-work journey --- 'Mind wanting' can be then a significant potential impediment but which can be effectively dealt with by using the mindfulness 'watching' procedure - the individual can watch the mind 'wanting', but then not be 'drawn into it'.

There are all those potential distractions and interruptions from 'life as we know it' for a start (some daily relax/meditation time can also help 'pass by' such distractions). There's the fact that some time may be needed to do the 'mind de-cluttering' work (a trick here could be to value the progress being made, and the good feeling to be 'en route', countering any mind 'impatience for the end result'). Then

there can be what's called 'set backs', where the individual may feel they've gone backwards rather than forward – maybe they've got a bit over-anxious for positive results? The trick again may well be to be able to develop that 'mind watching' habit, watching the mind's 'wanting' -in this case for 'progress' - which then can create detachment via a bit of space and time, from any habitual mindsets ---

This leads to 'mind management', in that due to the problems and limitations of current cultural life, along with then the promise of 'golden times ahead', there's the possibility of the mind getting a little impatient, the 'mind wanting' 'quick results, probably a relatively common occurrence, especially maybe under modern 'fast-paced' conditions, but potentially limiting to progress. Again, though, the 'system' as above has an answer in that the mindfulness technique can then be used to 'watch' such 'mind wanting', then to be able to recognise the potential problem and 'discount' it i.e. not to follow down the mind's 'automatic pathway' and some (Buddha for one?) might say that freedom from 'mind wanting' ('the tyranny of the mind') is one of the keys to well-being --- it could be one of the great personal liberations - ?)

Again, *this might well relate to Buddha's warnings about 'desires' -----*

Question :

'There seems quite a lot to it all – where do I start?

Starting one's own 'mindfulness practice could be a good initial move (*see later for more on the 'mechanics'*).

'A journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step ----- ' (eastern mystic)

It can be useful to bear in mind that it's about embarking on a journey,(some of course are already 'journeying'), a potentially very rewarding journey, and time's needed for such a journey.

When people suddenly experience altered awareness/consciousness states, it's not necessarily that sudden - a lot of 'journeying' is often likely to have occurred before any such sudden 'transcendence'.

There's often probably a lot of positives to experience within the journey. If a person, as is often the way, starts with, say, observing their reactions to one situation (say, impatience when things 'don't work out'), and doing the mindfulness 'self-work' then gains the ability to change their automatic response, they will have also gained a certain amount of 'real self strength' and increased awareness within the process, both of which can contribute significantly to life satisfaction levels.

As 'nothing succeeds like success' this awareness is then likely to extend to other areas to further illuminate how and why behaviours and feelings occur, which then in turn will help with furthering understanding of self and others ---- it's a cumulative process, and if it doesn't result in the short/medium term in experiencing a 'transcended consciousness' state, it can still greatly enhance understanding, self-management and life returns. The effective approach might well be to embark on the journey and see where it leads, rather than, say, build up any 'mind expectations' ---- In itself, it can of course be a positive experience to feel oneself 'on the journey ----'

The modern movement of 'mindfulness practice' provides then a useful and usable vehicle with which to tackle 'the inner journey', and associated techniques such as meditation can also be useful in terms of helping to 'slow the pace down', helping 'mental clarity; and such like.

(see below for more on 'mindfulness').

>>>>>> -----

'Back on track' - on the 'real self' journey-----

A quick re-cap ----

A 'freeranger'-type journey to 'self-realisation', fulfilment and well being can involve the following :

- finding the 'real self' state, which is where it's said individual well-being, fulfilment, validity/security and contentment lie

It's thought that quite a few more individuals than maybe first thought experience such 'advanced' being states, particularly as a person at this stage probably has then little need for self promotion ---

- the 'real self' state lies beyond the mind, in the sense that as real self strength grows, the power of the mind to control the individual diminishes, to the point that the mind becomes the servant of 'the real self', rather than the autonomous controller of the individual

- because these days there's so much matter and activity that can influence and 'gear' the mind, it can be beneficial to take pro-active steps to counter the mind's level of power and activity

- both ancient techniques (eg. meditation) and modern movement techniques (eg. mindfulness practice) can help the individual in her/his quest to quieten the mind's activity and to align with reality

- learning how to handle and change 'automatic mindset responses' (or 'pre-set mental tapes') can be useful to be able to then over time break through to 'beyond mind awarenesses', at the same time building 'real self' strengths and gaining the positive experience of self-nurturing skills building

- the ability to be able then to 'manage the mind' then brings the capability of 'freeing' the individual from previously laid down patterns and traits, and even deeper-seated mind-sets

- the 'work on self' mindfulness process brings in turn more awareness to the individual and the on-going positive experience of feeling their own real strength building - the increasing awareness, along with then 'natural universal insights' arriving to the individual, can build into 'expanded consciousness' states which can result in well-being, security and fulfilment for the individual.

>>>>>>>> -----

On ---- present day complications -----

Awareness and understanding can go hand-in-hand and can greatly assist an individual in managing life effectively and productively. To this end it can be useful to review factors which potentially impinge on any 'self strength' building process, 'forewarned being forearmed' ---

Modern life can be intrusive – with commercial pressures, massive media activity, micro-managing governments, strong social norming forces via mega screen use - there's probably never been a time with so many influences, messages, conditionings, acting, 'bearing down' even, on the individual, potentially sapping individual strength and empowerment - ? Probably too, the individual is faced with more 'large power' organisations in current 'large-ist' culture, take the sheer number for instance of large commercial outfits, with often a 'big is best' approach again potentially diminishing micro-small individual power – ---

Imagine the contrast to living, say, here in the UK two hundred or so years ago - what a difference -- --- It would probably be a 'small rural life' in small communities where everyone knew each other, where everyone had a specific place and level in a structured society, where illiteracy was common and mass media opportunities non-existent, where life was a lot simpler and less complex and complicated -----

'We must make things as simple as possible ---- but not simpler --- ' (Einstein, scientist)

There is a considerable 'simple living' movement, with quite a number, for instance, of books devoted to it (see internet), no doubt at least in part as a reaction against the noise, the weight and the 'razmataz' of today's urbanised, fast-paced culture - ? No doubt its followers feel at some level or other that there's a need to 'simplify' life to counter the considerable level of 'complexities' the modern world presents, and 'instinctively' are then drawn to a 'simple living' way of life.

W found that modern life was problematical for her and she craved for a simpler life close to nature, which fortunately for her she was able to organise by leading a semi hermit-type of life living in a wood in west Wales (UK).

R was drawn to a simplified, light eco-footprint style of life with economic and effective use of resources, plus active involvement with life support activities such as providing fuel and food, along with close contact with nature, which again he was fortunate to be able to organise on a relative small area of land and a change in lifestyle facilitated by an early retirement.

S and P bought themselves a run-down country cottage with a large garden and were able to establish an organic semi self-sufficient lifestyle in which via building, wood sourcing and home growing activities they were able to have an active, light eco-footprint, involved lifestyle.

'Mea culpa ----- '

Has man been operating over 'self-orientatedly' (encouraged of course by the 'out-for-self' self-gain orientated 'mass' cultures) leading to over-consumption, in turn leading to planet degradation - ? There may well be quite a few who might have difficulty with such notions, not wanting to see themselves in any shade of 'bad light', and/or not wanting too to curtail 'luxury' lifestyles -? The era of 'free market' (which ironically and paradoxically may have been a significant factor in creating modern 'unfree' markets, due to proper free/perfect market conditions not being met - ?) has seemingly 'automatically' jettisoned notions of self-responsibility – some have said man has been 'unfettered in the sweet shop' - leading to over-consumption. It could be it's time the nettle's grasped and man has to re-draw - back onto the 'responsible road', saying 'ok, mea culpa, now is the time to think beyond short-term gain, the time to secure a longer-term future for the planet' --- and for mankind -----' - ---

'Man creates ---- and heaven --- or hell --- can be the result'

(Richard Feynman, renowned US scientist)

'It's no use running ----- if on the wrong road ----' (German-originated saying)

Practical matters : Countering --- (1)

An actual case-study can illustrate 'countering' strategy :

One modern group had countered the 'big modern mainstream culture' factor by more or less re-creating simple pastoral lifestyles, combining it along with modern advantages such as, say, modern medical facilities and internet facility. They had clubbed together to buy a small farm, on which they created separate living quarters from the spacious farm house and the plentiful supply of barns and outbuildings. The remaining buildings and the land were then shared resources for this group not only to practise a considerable degree of self-reliance and self-sufficiency, but also produce home-grown produce for cash sales, and of course, to make use 'recreationally' of the beautiful space they lived in, complete with many trees, rolling countryside views and a stunning three acre lake.

They ran their farming joint operation on lines which satisfied their own needs in relation to co-existing with nature and animals. Their small dairy herd of twenty cows, for instance, were milked in a low-tech cowshed, the better to gain good, close relationships with the cows, which were identified by names rather than numbers. The cows were milked once a day rather than the normal twice-a-day commercial practice, their calves (cows need to give birth to then give milk) not being weaned off the cows at the normal day-old stage, but rather at the natural 10 – 11 month stage. This gave less milk to process – the group made 'craft' butter and cheese from it - which suited, and also produced twenty or so a year of sturdy young cattle, which were then sold on as breeding cattle and/or 'stores', for other farmers to grow on.

On the social side this situation gave these 'freeranger' people the chance to operate as their own self-regulating mini community, enjoying the benefits of the same and making their own independent decisions in relation to the running of the micro community, and of the farm, as well as extra security from being part of such a situation. The children greatly enjoyed their childhoods in this near idyllic playground setting, and having ready-made playmates on hand.

Their 'unique' lifestyle living arrangements interestingly lead to a situation where the children involved were able to command respect and a degree of envy from their classmates at school, with their farm-life advantages such as treehouses and water swings and the like proving to be big attractions, as well as their 'eco' and animal-orientated lifestyles.

Modern house building here currently in the UK at a relatively small market-style local town acts as a contrast to the situation described above, in that many houses have recently been built and added to this town, but all with small, tiny even, gardens, which along with press-button life in the houses, don't seem to offer too much, say, in the way of self-reliant living opportunity, involvement with living activities and nature – or 'space to expand' - ?

'No 'vra vra vroom' ---- ?'

Several writers (Orwell, Huxley, Schumacher, Levine, Pirsig, Foley et al- see bibliography) have pointed out that in today's world the individual has to cope with many instances of 'big power', there being so many large organisations in today's 'larg-ist' world, and that such a situation, along with 'heavy'

commercial pressures via advertising, has tended to de-value and disempower the individual. One of the features in the UK of such a culture is that a prevailing commercial approach has been one of an 'on the make' nature, the name of the game being to maximise profits, hence extract as much money as possible from people, (rather than, say, offering a good value for money product/service to people), who then become the 'prey' in the 'large predator' sea ---- and might mean that dents in strengths and confidence due to living 'small' in a 'largist' culture may well impact negatively in terms then of people embarking on the 'fulfilment way' --- ?

(a group of chief executives of large firms have recently (2019) made a declaration to the effect that business has been too preoccupied with making maximum profits, and needs to re-orient to get a better business/society balance, serving societies better ---).

'Travelling ---- '

It's the purpose of this piece and website to 'go into bat' for the small, the powerless – the individual, and to point out the important issue that 'salvation'/fulfilment may well be found at the individual rather than the organisational level, as Buddha himself suggests, and if so, then modern 'big-ist' life could be working against it rather than for it - --- This work then seeks to help to clarify such a process and to offer help and support for those individuals who do decide to 'travel the salvation/fulfilment way', again as Buddha might have said. Many Buddha sayings concern themselves with a common theme – i.e. that the individual needs to make their own journey, it's their call – for example :

'It's for the individual to make their own journey to salvation – no-one else can, and no-one else may ---- we ourselves must walk the path'

Others have supported such notions such as Robert Pirsig in his renowned book , *Zen and the Art of Motor Cycle Maintenance*, saying that whilst the commercial world tended to be focused on 'quantity' ('economies of scale' and so forth), however the guardians of 'quality' were individuals.

'Dead ends --- ?'

'Individualism' though might not necessarily have a totally unblemished aspect in current times with critics arguing for instance that there has been undue emphasis on 'out-for-self' approaches, under tempered by needed socially-orientated aspects and producing individuals over focused on self, under focused for instance on wider society aspects, (*maybe then contributing in less personal resilience / more 'self rightness'- ? There's though been quite a bit of comment that the experience of the coronavirus and what it has entailed has potentially revitalised social priorities and community values – a 're-balancing' of priorities due to 'dynamic conditions' - ?*).

As the 'salvation/realising true self' route may not always be the easiest option, the psychologist Jung, for instance, suggesting that because some 'imperfections'/difficulties and negative aspects might be encountered, it was unlikely to be a 'mass popular' route, maybe any lowering of resilience in people might then result in less of an uptake of this option - ? On the other hand the increasing use and popularity of user-friendly self-work techniques such as 'mindfulness practice' (see more later), together with easy access via the internet, could mitigate against any such decline ----- Changing mainstream cultural expectations may also prove to be of some help .

It could be though that the weight and force of the mainstream culture in promoting a 'be ok' mass type of message, (eg. 'be a good citizen, spend/consume a lot') could have had an inhibiting effect for individuals seeking to explore their own 'Buddha' ways, as those authors mentioned above have indicated.

Practical matters : 'Countering (2)' --the 'ghastly white disease of idealism'

The 'mindfulness' techniques are undoubtedly useful in helping people learn to manage accepting less than perfect aspects about themselves, (is 'instant perfection' a 'flawed' concept? - as the D.H.Lawrence quote above might suggest. Has any 'perfect' person ever been found?), using then this facility to then move themselves forward, and in so doing helping also to counter any low tolerance/perfection messages from general culture.

eg. adult females in the UK 'beat themselves up' (as inadequate, imperfect) on average eight times a day, not a practice likely to be helpful towards any self-realisation positive building process-? Such focus on self-criticism could well have resulted from a mainstream culture's messages of 'perfection expectation' - ?

The potential difficulties and 'limitations' touched on in this section can of course be countered, and an effective 'countering plan' is made, as a later section will attempt to expand on.

>>>>>-----

Along the way ----'just divine ----- '

Another way the advance of man has been looked at is as a progression from 'animal' to the 'divine' which fits in with the Zen and other writings' notion of 'God' being a potentiality in man. The progression then looks like :

'Animal >>>>>>> Human >>>>>>>'Expanded awareness/Personal Spirituality/Divine

The writer Pierre de Chardin, for instance, amongst others, was of the opinion that '*man is essentially and potentially a spiritual being having a human experience*', rather than the reverse. At the same time there's the idea that 'spirituality' is not necessarily automatically linked to religion; that a person can be 'spiritual' having for instance a strong connection with nature, or via 'care/service to self and others'.

Such a progression could help to illuminate, for instance, why people and their collections of abilities, traits and personalities can vary so much, and why some humans, without their own experience(s) of, say, 'spiritual', and/or 'the divine', can then use the rational mind to discount 'non concrete' spirituality so readily - ? Maybe the progression outlined above is a 'natural progression' – the fact that it's not necessarily been significantly in evidence may be more to do with 'man' being 'hung up' elsewhere (eg. 'mired in materialism') rather than it being, say, an inauthentic progression -? The 'organisational' approach to the spiritual seems to have had in practice in the west, for instance, limited and waning effectiveness, which again may tie in with the notion that authentic spirituality occurs at the individual rather than organisational level - ?

(in the UK, more people in 2020 attend spiritual services than watch football matches ----)

Where such a 'progression' range has been in evidence, again maybe it being comparatively rare,(or, 'unsung?'), it's possible it could have been been 'over awed', taking focus away from it being a potentially 'normal' progression - ? The holistic benefits of the 'finished product' i.e. the self-realised, fulfilled person, are seemingly 'full and bountiful', sufficient to 'turn heads', unless of course the 'mind' has already been 'tamed' and become 'the servant' rather than remain 'the master' - ? The supposition for this work is that the 'expanded awareness/transcended consciousness' stage could be a natural and normal authentic stage of the journey which could then be treated as a natural progression ---- easier, though, in today's world, maybe, said than done - ?

'You can go your own way ----'

So goes the Fleetwood Mac song, but whilst the sentiment might be helpful, along with self-awareness of individual social needs and sensitivities, in reality is it quite so straightforward? Often in the world, for instance, the reality maybe that the relevant culture (eg. of, say, autocratic nature), is geared strongly towards society priorities, leaving then less room for those of individuals. In commercial life, for instance, business approaches such as 'max profit 'on the make' business practice might well impinge on the freedom of individuals to act then fully in their own interests (eg. high level of commercial influence via high advertising activity).

Even in democracies, traditionally charged with upholding individual freedom and rights, true democracy might be a 'limited edition' , such as in the case of a culture only realistically offering a choice of two political parties, and then a strong possibility of two polarised approaches - ? The apparatus then of 'societies as we know them' might well act counter productively in terms of individuals being able to access their 'own paths' - ? There may need to be awareness of such factors from individuals, together with appropriate measures to counter any potential 'barrier-ing' effects (see later).

The notion that an individual pursuing 'own path' living can be operating 'anti socially', is often though not complete in that according to psychologists such as the aforementioned Abraham Maslow, there is the safeguard of the individual having social needs and priorities amongst her/his collection of 'natural needs', which can then, if 'un-barriered', tend to activate 'naturally' ---- (a process Charles Handy, well-known business guru, termed 'honourable individualism').

('Going own way can work in the sense of 'making one's own journey'. 'Going own way' in terms of a person thinking however they like, particularly if it's just to suit/benefit them, or doing 'whatever they like', say, treating others not well, and/or with, say, a lack of respect, may not work so well over time in terms of progressing via 'journeying', as such thinking could be limited by being too aligned with mind/ego).

'Disentangling -----'

The many pressures and influences modern life exerts as outlined above can act as impediments to people finding fulfilment via finding their 'real selves' - it's as if the 'wheat needs separating from the chaff', as it were, and to find 'the real self', people need to 'walk their own path', which as above, might not always be a straightforward practice in these days of large organisation preponderance , and people too need to be able to function in cultures as they are set up. Some 'sorting' for the individual may be in order, to get things straight(er), as many no doubt do as a matter of course in life, although a more prepared approach may be useful for some, and in fact no doubt be of use to many.

To proceed, a presumption is made at this point, which is that for the individual, the dominant aspect of their make-up at this stage is most usually the mind - it's the mind that's often operating

'autonomously'. To some this way of operating might seem to be self-evident and 'natural'. The potential problem though, in terms of then accessing 'real self' is that conditioning from the past (and present) might well be active in the present, and which although active, may not be productive for present and future purposes.

It was recently reported for instance, as above, that adult females in the UK 'beat themselves up' on average eight times a day. They have learn't to be this self-critical somewhere in the past (cultural pressures?) and that then the 'mental tape' 'keeps on a-running'. If a person perpetually keeps on putting themselves down, as these females appear to be doing, what's the chances of them 'getting themselves up', to their real-self strength levels for instance? Not too high, probably, so a 'useful' example of how 'mental tapes' operating from the past can be inhibiting 'progress' in current time.

Such a 'mind stranglehold' has been termed 'the tyranny of the mind', and the question then becomes 'how can such a situation be 'dealt with', so that there's a 'freeing up' of the mental processes, so then new, more positive and productive lines of thought can occur, and room for wider awareness be facilitated -? Such 'historic' mental tapes are likely to be well established,' 'grooved' in, likely to persist.

One answer proving to be ever more used, and effective, is, as before, for the individual to embark on a programme of 'mindfulness practice' which can do what's required - that is, effectively counters unproductive mind tapes operating from the past (or present), whilst at the same time facilitating needed self-nurturing. There are probably potentially many areas of imperfection in individuals – did a 'perfect individual' ever exist? - from, say, not being keen to face more difficult situations, to impatience when things don't work out, to the 'hurry, hurry syndrome, being 'driven' ever hurriedly onward, being fixated on the opinion of others, and so on--- and so on ----

(there can be reticence to face/look at perceived 'negative' aspects, possibly/probably at least partly as a result of mainstream 'perfection' conditioning pressures ----- mindfulness practice though incorporates a strong 'being understanding/kind to self' factor so can help deal with such reticence --- and which in turn can then lead to more tolerance and kindness to others -----)

Journeying – More on 'countering' : 'Coping with conditioning' --- (1) historical '

The process of 'countering' is then centered around dealing with the conditioning that the individual is likely to have experienced in the past and of course from the present culture, involving a 'spring cleaning' type operation.

Taking then as a further conditioning example, a probable common trait, mentally based, called the 'hurry, hurry' syndrome, where the individual feels 'driven' to be pressing ever forward to the next 'event', but contributing to stress levels (lack of rest), and tending to deny the individual the pleasure and satisfaction available from the 'present' event (already moving on to the 'next' event). In a mindfulness practice situation, the individual is encouraged not to deny the 'hurry, hurry' impetus, but to 'watch' it rather than to automatically go with it ('acceptance' practice).

Whilst this initially may not always be easy to do, because the automatic reaction itself is well 'grooved', with a bit of practice it does get easier, and can be a bit of an eye-opener to the individual in terms of how much they've been under the control of such mentally-driven automatic behaviour, and how much this process has been acting as a sort of regular 'bullying' event to them, self-bullying in effect with often the root cause of that of being told in earlier life that they must be this or that, with the 'must' constituent being the driving/bullying component – the 'tyranny of the mind' -----

There are some useful and helpful manuals to help such mindfulness practice, (see bibliography), which involves self work, promising a good pay off for this input in terms of real progress in terms of real self realisation from 'stuck' situations. The practice can also bring further benefits to the individual, such as :

- by working with 'unproductive' traits, it helps individuals 'face', and then accept, 'less than perfection' . This in turn has the useful and needed longer-term effect of helping then the individual to generally 'face and accept', and work with, 'reality', and create a better relationship with reality, countering then any 'wishful thinking, escape from reality', or 'running before walking' tendencies' ('self -acceptance' has been said to be a key in the process of realising 'real self').

- by learning to accept the unproductive trait(s), (via watching rather than reacting, and remaining non self-critical), the individual becomes then more self-tolerant and more self-compassionate, which tends to increase over time, especially as these may have often been fairly missing components in peoples' lives, and are components of real self strength.

- the 'watching' of the trait happening automatically then stops an automatic headlong move in that direction and gives the individual that bit of space and time to then be able to choose their own ('non-automatic') response/non-response pattern,, building real self strength in the process. .

- such self-work can be done confidentially, in private (some might feel they'd welcome some mentoring help), and at a pace and level commensurate with the particular individual's circumstances and capabilities.

- the 'watching' process then provokes awareness within the individual of how they have been/ are 'operating'. Such 'awareness awakenings' plus greater self-acceptance can tend then to extend beyond the initial stages, contributing significantly to a more general raised level of awareness, particularly in the area of self-operating which can then extend to the area of further understanding of others.

- the whole process with its cumulative benefits as above, generally via higher awareness and understanding levels, plus more compassionate self-management, then can contribute to greater inner self strength, and positive well-being, again useful/needed trends in terms of heading in the 'real self' direction.

nb. the 'rush for results' syndrome -----'Rome wasn't built in a day', - it's good to allow time for this process to work out. A potentially common mindset, though, may well be that there's an 'unrealistic' desire to 'make haste quickly', but which can be turned to advantage by applying the mindfulness process to it, i.e. watching the mindset but not engaging with it, so then by degrees reducing the mindset's power. 'Mind wanting' could be one of the most common 'hindrances' to real progress - it can then translate to 'over strong' desire, and often this desire involves a 'to be elsewhere', 'to be otherwise' aspect, taking the individual away from reality, which can then be a limitation in terms of the search for 'real self'.

Such benefits as mentioned above are gained only if the individual takes their own action -----(it's called *direct experience*) but then progress can often be made relatively quickly with a positive and encouraging 'build up' situation developing --- and, 'nothing succeeds like success'. One of the possibly most common 'historical mindsets' could be that of the 'beating self up' self-critical variety, a result of

quite a bit of general culture 'instant perfection' pressure in the past. A current in demand 'life coach' in the USA. Brene Brown, put it as follows :

'Parents' job is to say to children, yes, you are imperfect, and to make sure they're worthy of love and belonging, not despite their imperfection, but because of it. But as very few of it believe it ourselves, it's then hard to give it to our children.

One of the great things about mindfulness practice, besides its ease of use, is that it leads the individual in the opposite direction than that of Brene Browns sentiments - that is, to then be able to face up to their 'imperfection(s)', accept them, and do realistic and authentic self-work to change/improve them, gradually then freeing the individual from 'mind control', escaping 'the tyranny of the mind ---- ' (a real personal freedom - ---). Such a process then encourages the individual to be more self-tolerant (an authentic basis for being tolerant of others--?) and overall to be on-going quite a bit more self-nurturing (the lack of which in the world could be a base faultline in 'life as we know it' - ?)

Journeying – More on countering : 'Coping with conditioning' (2) – current – 'keeping sane in an insane world ----- '

The second area of 'mental spring cleaning' relates to the pressures and influences of the current period. As before, it's probable that modern current life presents the individual with more influences, conditionings and pressures than ever before, given, for instance , the level and power of modern media, the number of large 'power' organisations, and the tendency for some modern governments to 'micro manage' (a charge which for instance has been laid against the UK government), all potentially competing for 'head space' and undoubtedly then leaving insufficient room for, say, 'insights' to occur, which are likely needed for any fuller 'expanded awareness' state to be experienced (insights are powerful universal truths which then 'chime' with the inner developing 'real' self). The strategy here, then, needs to be geared to either lessening the impact of these modern transmits or reducing the reception of them (or both). Some of the (many) active strategies that could be employed are reviewed as follows :

----- 'hermit-ing', which sounds maybe 'extreme' but apparently is a growing trend :

' S lives in a hut in west Wales in a wood. She keeps a small goat flock for milk and dairy products, and some hens for eggs (they lay on the roof of the hut) plus cultivating a patch of land for organic vegetable production She'd found modern life too 'complexly fragmented', too 'selfish and greedy' and too noisy for her strong desire to live close to nature and to commune with it. Her 'sense' was to simplify'

Maybe Einstein would have concurred :

'we must make things as simple as possible – but not simpler'.

'A character who'd fallen foul of 'the law of the land' went to live on his own on his release from prison in a remote part of an 'out of the way' country estate in the UK. His shelter was a tent and being an accomplished shot he was able to provide most of his food himself, the rest being left periodically at a pre-arranged point. He lasted there for six months, never seeing or contacting another person in this period, gaining enough peace and closeness with nature to then experience a transcended 'real self' consciousness state.'

----- part-time hermit-ing

The singer and movie star Bette Midler it was, who's quote was 'you get to the stage of needing a quiet green oasis'. No doubt too that part of the 'goodies package' experienced by that group mentioned earlier with the communal farm was to be able to spend time in the space that was the 'quiet countryside'.

'An early-retired web site writer (guess who?) was even on a relatively small site able to build a retreat cabin out of mainly re-cycled rubbish-type materials, in a small paddock conveniently surrounded by high hedges and trees, giving a daily quiet 'oasis semi-recluse' experience --- '

----- downsizing

This route may perhaps also be described as 'getting out of the rat race' :

'A rat race is for rats, not for humans ---- ' Jimmy Reid, renowned Senior Shop Steward, Clydeside (UK)

'The trouble is, even if you win the rat race, you're still a rat ---- ' (anon)

Maybe the quotes above could in fact describe a core problem ---- ? Competitiveness would appear to have been significantly hyped up within the dimensionally-limited 'free market' business approach which has prevailed in recent decades – some would argue that there is imbalance, illustrated maybe for instance in the UK given the extent of food banks within a so-called wealthy and civilised country - ?

-----altered lifestyle

It's reported that many have 'dropped out' of the mainstream 'race', to find a calmer, more fulfilling lifestyle, maybe often with fewer material returns :

'J and M worked in higher education in the UK but became disaffected due to seemingly endless reorganisations and the increasingly competitive culture, contrasting with the previous positive 'team' culture. They opted for early retirement (on reduced pensions), sold their house for a good price, bought a flat at half the cost of the house, which they then rented out. Their own living arrangements were solved by the purchase of a 'live aboard' canal narrow boat – they had an interest in such a life – and became 'waterway wanderers', also spending time at creative crafts such as painting and patchwork. 'We feel we've recaptured our lives' was their pithy comment some months later.'

----- change of major life arrangements eg. work situation

Work matters and arrangements can of course seriously impact on peoples' lives and their ability to 'freely develop'. The mini case-study below can illustrate :

'P worked lecturing in a college and part of his work programme was to help run a summer school abroad in July. Before he departed he met up with his line manager to discuss his work arrangements for the next academic year, which both his line manager and he himself signed up to. On resuming duties after his stint abroad, he was informed that he now had a different line manager, who now stipulated what his forthcoming work programme would be (i.e. no discussion/opportunity to contribute given), which just happened to be close to double the workload he had agreed to before his summer work stint. He was somewhat dismayed perceiving that such a workload would be nigh on impossible to deliver within normal working hours, certainly in terms of the quality dimension, and would likely be pretty stressful.

Life, though, can sometimes deliver serendipity. He arrived home that very night somewhat downcast, not least because he was at the time of life where the 'quality' element mean't quite a bit to him, and which would undoubtedly be compromised by the new 'heavy quantity' element now being proposed. There was though, then a phone call from an ex-colleague now at another college at which P had formerly worked. Would P be interested in returning to this college to take up an upcoming position, the very nature of which did offer reasonable opportunity for 'quality operation'. P's mood lightened considerably and once the new position was secured, he was relieved and happy to be able to hand in his notice to his erstwhile college employer, leaving them then with a problem, as he saw it, of their own making ----'

The proposed imposition of new increased workloads automatically disrespected P who had discussed and agreed workloads, the new situation then disregarding P's situation and professional judgements, thrusting then P into a work situation which P felt would be over demanding and stressful, and have a zero capacity for catering for P's quality needs. Such a situation illustrates for instance how work situations can negatively affect peoples' lives – his employers weren't considering, for instance, how the new higher workloads might negatively affect P in terms of health issues brought on by stress – and of course P having then a negative-inducing strong element in such a high impact area of life as the work situation, could then effectively 'barrier' his longer-term development and life fulfilment.

Choosing 'X --- or Y ---- ?'

It's reported that management styles here in the UK in recent decades have followed the authority-gearred high control 'theory X' style model, enhancing managerial authority and control at the expense of employee motivation, particularly relevant, probably, to 'quality' considerations. Individuals could be well advised to (where possible) assess the style of potential employers in terms of providing work situations that portray reasonable rather than demanding expectations, and offer potentially positive returns, and preferably work situations which display a reasonable degree of human respect.. One study of longer-term effective managers of staff in their smaller businesses in the UK rural sector indicated that a strong majority of these managers employed the 'theory y' approach, which is essentially an 'inclusive' participatory approach taking into account the needs of employees.

'Working the small stuff' --- ' (---- and 'small' can be 'beautiful --- ')

Not everyone is necessarily in a position to counter the prevailing culture by making significant changes in their lives, but there's still stuff that can be done to do some effective 'countering'. Work, for instance, if it's problematic, say, in terms of over-expectationary outlooks from managers, can be 'managed'. One strategy to cope with over demanding management is to employ the 'smoke screen' response, always relaying to the manager how busy work-life is, the interim results of one's work, the upcoming work projects in the pipeline --- and so on. Such a strategy probably may work best for the employee who is doing a reasonable job, and delivering a reasonable level of work performance.

At the same time, 'work' can mentally be put in its own box, as something that may not be ideal but has to be undertaken, but 'in its own box' then limits its effects in wider living. There's also lots of small strategies that can help in the quest to keep a potentially pervasive culture at bay – individuals will likely employ those that suit – some examples are listed below :

- limiting exposure to daily news
- limiting exposure to social media

- limiting screen time exposure
- use of 'mute' button in relation to TV, selective 'positive experience' viewing
- greater priority given to periods of 'alone' restorative time
- time spent 'in nature'
- practising slow-down 'peace' patterns eg. meditating, walking in natural surroundings
- 'working with/on self' (eg. mindfulness practice which can help self-nurturing and building real self strength)
- taking up creative, past-times, fitness regimes etc.

Whatever small strategies are chosen and used, an important point can be that it is the individual doing something for themselves which in itself can induce better, more positive feelings ---- and from small acorns, do mighty oaks grow ---

Coping with conditioning (3) – the mindset side - positive self-work – mindfulness practice in practice

Most if not everyone will likely experience mind 'tapes' which are not necessary always helpful to productive living. Often maybe, an 'I'm not worthy' mental mindset has been learnt, maybe/probably from a general mainstream culture – it may be a residual (and/or current?) for instance from a culture that came over as viewing, say, females as 'lower competence/lower status' - ?

Being geared to be continually self-critical may be unlikely to be too motivating and encouraging, and so the fuller potential of such individuals could well be impaired, as well as their own experience in terms of 'life satisfaction'. Such mindsets tend to be 'set' and in place and tend to work 'automatically' in certain situations. They can be like tapes that will work again and again, and one way to change them or eradicate them is to in effect manually record more positive, self-nurturing stuff over them, or to practice 'negating' them by 'watchfulness', using techniques such as the modern mindfulness process and which at the same time is likely to build 'real self' strength.

One of the positive aspects of mindfulness self-work is that it promotes self-nurturing, taking the pressure off people to have to be 'this or that', to be in a way 'perfect'. In that sense it promotes a mature approach, one grounded in reality. Even those who present themselves as perfect physical humans, appearing to fit the 'perfect' bill in one sense, but by their level of focus on it might show potential 'flaws' - ? (eg. an over-developed sense of 'norming?'). And - what a relief, to be able to climb down from any culturally-directed 'perfect pedestal', especially if it tends to induce 'self-loathing', to 'just be natural', a far more likely route, maybe, to finding 'real selves' - ?

'The ghastly white disease of idealism/perfection-ism ----- ' (D.H.Lawrence, writer)

Mindfulness practice too is, 'user friendly' in the sense that it can be practised by the individual, in private if desired and at a pace compatible to themselves. It actively 'allows' for the individual to be 'imperfect', in that it encourages people to identify a trait which they feel they would like to change or improve, so early steps towards increased 'reality living' can be taken. In the case for instance of the self-critical females, mindfulness does not introduce another 'mind' rule (eg. 'it's wrong to be over self-

critical'), rather it helps the practitioner to accept the trait and then notice it appearing but then to aim to take a different approach to any such 'undesirable' trait, (whilst not introducing any further 'mind rules', and if further 'mind rules' do appear, as they well might, to also 'watch' this happening rather than get carried along by them ---)

The individual is then taking a self-tolerant approach , accepting now an 'imperfection', which then can translate into also taking a more tolerant approach to others, facilitated by the process then 'allowing' the individual to not automatically head down the self-critical route. Such work is empowering for the individual building 'real self' strength by developing an increased ability to 'take over the reins' from the 'automaton' process, whilst also being able to take a more self-nurturing approach (i.e. the opposite of the self-critical mode) via now developing the ability to accept themselves as they ('imperfectly') are, which also helps in the cause of increased 'reality living'.

'Getting more 'real' at the self level, can be the precursor to the individual connecting to bigger things - universal reality/energy, Tao, for instance.' (Anon)

Such work takes time and for most, probably involves repeated instances, all the while though building the positive aspects as outlined above. Developing inner self strength and in the process then adding awareness and understanding is a positive experience, and often people will extend their 'range' of use of the technique, the positive results of which then tend to become cumulative. This on-going cumulative self-strength building can be a powerful factor in terms of the individual positively experiencing an on-going increasing 'build' of personal strength, and of 'real self' persona.

Journeying - 'work-on-self' - mindfulness practice reviewed

Plainly a 'self-work' technique such as mindfulness practice which addresses what could be basic faultlines and is relatively easy and convenient to do, is attractive to would-be 'journeying' individuals, following in the steps of the 'great man', Buddha himself :

'Work out your own salvation : no-one else can, and no-one else may'. We must walk our own paths.'

The renowned psychologist, Carl Jung, felt that such 'self work' would be unpopular, in the sense that people wouldn't take to facing up to 'imperfections', due maybe at least partly to the fact that historically psychology tended-to focus on deep-seated 'personality flaws'. Techniques such as mindfulness practice are though making it much easier and more accessible, along with the fact that the world in general could be becoming less 'strung up' over 'perfection', giving individuals more 'permission' and freedom to be 'imperfect' ---- (eg, more general tolerance and awareness of depressive type illnesses)

'It's your call', Buddha's saying, and *'you have the right, as a human being, to travel on your path'*. More and powerful validation ----- from a top man, quite possibly the most 'aware' human to have lived. It seems pretty clear that he'd be a 'mindfulness' advocate if he were here today. And not too surprising that the mindfulness movement is a fast growing phenomenon these days - ?

Overview review

To 'gather things together', then, it can be useful to have an 'overview review' of the process of mindfulness practice :

- an 'improvable trait' is selected by the individual

Some examples : getting irritated/annoyed if things go wrong
getting impatient with others if their performance 'below scratch'
repeated difficulties 'making mind up'
worrying over small matters
hurrying 'to get things over'
not wanting to face problems
a 'beating self up' habit
a 'putting self down' habit
a general 'hurry, hurry' habit
a negative 'expecting the worse' mindset
an over positive outlook
an 'avoidance of difficulties' mindset
having a 'superiority' mental habit

(has anyone been yet 'invented' without 'imperfections' - ?)

- a differing approach is decided :

Example : - the 'trait isn't automatically 'trashed', but rather 'allowed' (as it's a 'set mindset' situation such traits will reoccur regularly anyway)

- when the trait does reoccur, the idea is to 'watch' it reoccurring, whilst at the same time to resist making judgement of it, and to resist 'auto behaviour' prompted by the trait.

- this move then creates just a bit of time and space for the 'automatic reaction' pattern not to kick in and for the individual to then actively choose another response pattern (eg. not to go down the automatic response route (eg.s to 'get angry', to 'get judgemental', to 'beat up'). This may take a bit of practice, and then the positive returns from the feeling of starting to free the self from automatic reactive behaviour patterns, building 'real self strength', tend to kick in, and provide motivation to continue and extend the practice

- the process is repeated as the mindset 'automatically' reoccurs :

- gradually though weakening the strength of the automatic response, whilst at the same time positively building the 'self strength' of the individual. The process of 'allowing' the trait can be essentially a bit of a breakthrough – a recognition and acknowledgement of 'imperfection' (often such traits and negative reactions to them can stem for instance from unrealistic 'instant perfection' expectations/and/or cultural 'messages' from general culture) and so then bringing a more tolerant approach to them plus an effective 'way out' from them, all adding up to a more positive 'self-nurturing' and 'free-ing' style

- the process, works well to create 'beyond the self' awareness, and then understanding

especially if extended to view wider aspects by the individual of their 'life views' and management. If the individual is then motivated to take on such a journey further down the track of self-knowledge, understanding and awareness, and thereby increases their understanding of and contact with 'reality', then there's the chance of gaining at some stage an 'expanded' awareness, so-called 'higher

consciousness' state, which is then likely to depend how far the individual travels on their 'self-development' journey

n.b. *Any journey to 'expanded' consciousness' levels is likely to involve such self-work to develop own awarenesses and self-understanding, which then forms the basis of fuller and wider levels of understanding. Is, for instance, the seeming common practice of people being given a 'blueprint' for 'how to be spiritual', in practice taking a 'wrong road', as responding to 'external' rules is somewhat different than responses from internal(to the individual) sources - ?*

A useful feature of mindfulness practice is that it facilitates such outcomes via a relatively easy, self-managed and 'low pain' process, which can bring benefits to the individual relatively quickly, (although it can be useful to 'keep an eye out' for the mind agitating for 'quick results', which can then be treated via the usual mindfulness process).

It can be quite an 'eye opener' for the individual who develops 'mind watching' to 'see' the degree of control over the individual the mind has, and that often seemingly operating 'automatically', as, erm, 'a mind of its own'---- It's maybe little wonder then, that such 'mind control' has been labelled 'the tyranny of the mind', and working free from it to then be able to 'real self' operate can be a key liberation for the individual, facilitating then 'bigger self' operation ---

Remembering Eckhart Tolle's comments earlier :

'----- the mind becomes the servant rather than the controller ---- '

On - Spiritual life on earth - ?

There's quite a few quotes these days about people being essentially spiritual beings experiencing a physical life on earth, plus plenty of material, say, on the net relating to 'spiritual awakening'. One idea, then, is that the 'being' development of the individual will end up, sooner or later, at the 'spiritual being' stage, which would seem to relate to the seemingly eternal notion that 'man' is 'wandering in the wilderness', and needing to 'find the way home'. Some writers (eg. John Lane – see bibliography) refer to modern man living in a 'de-sacralised' universe. It maybe important to recognise - or for 'the authorities' to recognise – that according to fairly recent reports in the broadsheet papers (in the UK) that in excess of 80% of individuals have experienced at the spiritual level and rate spirituality as 'important' ----

It does seem, according again to the net, that quite a few have experienced/ are experiencing 'spiritual awakening' and that this experience can cause the individual consternation and/or anxiety. The factor that mainstream cultural life is so often in the direction of 'heavy materialism', and that such a happening (i.e. a spiritual awakening) is therefore not of the 'mainstream' flow, could be at least partly instrumental in contributing to such consternation and anxiety, particularly maybe given fairly strong modern 'social norming' trends - ?

Some (eg. Thomas Moore, spiritual writer) have suggested that the spiritual side has generally, been 'over-awed', (and to some extent removed from potential attainment by so-called 'ordinary people' - ?) then losing the sense that it could be a usual stage in the life/development of the individual. Again the above information re. individuals' beliefs (above) could tend to support such a view, in that over 80% of individuals reported that a spiritual side of life was important to them.

There are net sites that seek to help individuals experiencing such 'spiritual awakening' changes in their lives, and the supportive mentoring offered may well be an effective and useful process for those particular individuals.

n.b. *'spiritual' may not be confined to religious experience – some feel, for instance, that connections with the natural world can contain spiritual elements.*

End piece ----

Investigating 'the self' has traditionally probably often been tetchy ground, 'no, no' ground in fact, in perhaps many cases. Traditional psychotherapy practice could have contributed to such reticence, with its perceived focus on potentially 'deep seated character flaws'. More recent approaches concentrating more on behavioural aspects along with the work of some psychotherapists dealing successfully with problems occurring due to, say, prolonged stress periods, have probably paved the way for somewhat more prosaic and practical methods, of which the mindfulness technique could be said to be prominent, particularly in view of how large a movement it has become.

There could also have been issues with individuals being inhibited by mainstream culture conditioning, particularly of the nature of 'cultural perfection expectation', and not then having 'permission' for such self exploration - ? (as various writers have indicated). Depression has long been a tricky area (instead of a 'natural phenomena' -?) - modern, more accepting approaches can undoubtedly help.

Such newer, modern techniques as mindfulness practice are then representative of perhaps what's been a needed shift, facilitating the individual to take a needed greater level of self-control, and to some extent escaping the seemingly all-pervading clutches of the 'experts', (including governments), which can induce elements of 'passivity' which sometimes aren't too helpful for instance, in the cause of self-motivation and self-exploration.

(not to suggest that experts are per se a problem, rather it can be the extent to which the individual and her/his inner strength, being the 'low power' elements, can be 'limited', even 'bye-passed' and therefore weakened - ?).

Has too 'modern mainstream man' fallen prey to the 'glittery gold' blandishments that a heavily promoted materialistic culture can conjure up - ? Maybe such a culture is something of an illusion in itself, in that as before recent reports in broad sheet papers in the UK have indicated that modern man rates spirituality as an important feature in their lives (whereas mainstream culture has tended to de-focus spiritual influence whilst promoting material goals and values - ?)

The commercial sector in life, with its seemingly ever-increasing number of giant and large organisations, has in terms of materialistically-based power, waxed significantly in recent eras, exercising then a powerful influence/effect within society, whilst at the same time the spiritual organs of western-style materialistically-based cultures, the 'official religions', have maybe not unsurprisingly, waned. It may pay to keep the writer Bill Bryson's wry (earlier quoted) comment in mind :

'We used to build civilisations ; now we build shopping malls'

Apparently though, more people in the UK still attend spiritual services than watch football matches ---

Commercial focus and power has been strongly focused on money making - 'maximising profits' having become the order of the day, fuelled by the (dimensionally limited?) philosophy of 'free market' operations. Many might have considered that such a trend then produces a society too narrowly drawn, a view now somewhat belatedly adopted by business leaders, a prominent group of chief executives having recently (2019) issued a statement to this effect, and that businesses need to be 'more socially targetted and responsible'.

Others have criticised such a heavily commercialised culture as being 'limited dimensionally', with a general 'dumbing down' effect. Money can no doubt be a powerful drug-like phenomenon, with its own potentially powerful 'conditioning' effect the more it is promoted, to the point that it was not particularly uncommon to hear the 'it's all about money' platitude in business circles. Some suggest that money making has taken a too prominent role :

'----- and so Europeans were torn from their roots and cast adrift in a pathless and de-sacralised universe'

(Timeless Beauty John Lane)

We're all then 'cast adrift', with, as Buddha says, only ourselves to save us --- ? *(but with 'help from the universe' if we head down the right direction - ?)*

'It's no use running if on the wrong road' (saying of German origin)

Money though, served a particularly useful service when it first came into circulation (and still does) in that trade, always a 'social' transaction, had met some difficulties without it. How for instance could the village bootmaker exchange services with the village thatcher, one thatch operation maybe the equivalent of 60 pairs of boots - ? Or the man with a small quarry could have difficulties doing trade with a farmer - *'but I ain't got nowhere to put 5 pigs?'* Along came the common means of exchange and 'bingo' - trade problems solved, apart from maybe longer-term 'money addiction' problems which may have then occurred - ? Maybe getting a more fundamental 'take' on the role of money - ie. in the longer run, money works better as a 'means', an effective exchange mechanism, rather than an 'end -? - wouldn't necessarily be too bad a thing - ?

Some old-time common sayings allude to the same : 'money's made round to go around', 'money's like manure - in piles it stinks, spread around it does good', 'money be a good servant, but a bad master'. In the UK in historical traditional trade, any individual who was 'on the make' and patently 'out for his/her self', particularly from the money angle, was then ostracised in trade and in society, a somewhat differing situation than in modern times - ?

The lure and power of money being what it is, and money being so involved in human life, may mean that any longer-term 'money thrall' problem might take a bit of facing, a bit of solving ----- ? Maybe, say, the mindfulness trend of the individual 'taking back control', though, might yet be the 'saving grace' - ? It may well help if, as above, focus is re-aimed onto money being a 'means' (of exchange), rather than an 'end', with 'money sufficiency' rather than 'money maximising' as a more of a working goal, as it undoubtedly is for many smaller 'lifestyle' type businesses - ?

In lifestyle enterprises, with high 'heart' content, 'profit sufficiency' can be a more practical (and tangible) goal, then providing the enterprise with a solid 'base' from which to then achieve the desired/ needed goals of that particular lifestyle enterprise (eg. a 'family farm').

In an uncertain world money of course can improve matters – not having enough of it to provide a next meal for instance, is a dire situation. Maybe such a strong focus on money and wealth making has at least partly emanated from the ‘de-sacralised world’ living conditions, complete with a ‘sub-conscious’ insecurity producing effect --- ?

There’s also the case that some would say that ultimately real ‘lasting’ security comes with the on-going development of the individual’s ‘being’, to the point where she/he is fully integrated with and connected to ‘Tao’- the universal energy force, the destination of which can be reached by the individual following Buddha’s advice and undertaking their own journey of self-development and awareness expansion, to which mindfulness practice can contribute significantly. In a ‘westernised’ world with all its ‘goodies’, maybe though such self-development work and the notion of ‘expanded consciousness’ ‘blissful’ ‘unified’ states could sound somewhat far-fetched - ?

There is, though, considerable content on the net, for instance, relating to ‘simple living’, the better then to be able to cope with, ‘unravel’ even, modern complexities to then access ‘the right development roads’ ----

There are too the current trends to consider, ‘mindfulness practice’ for instance becoming an increasingly used technique, younger generations ‘rebellious’ against the older generations and their perceived far more ‘comfortable and secure’ positions, sometimes maybe inducing ‘superiority syndrome’, plus a renewed motivation towards anti planet degradation, and reportedly, an increased and renewed interest amongst people in spiritual matters -----

Well, it all fits in with that existential view that planet earth operates on the ‘balancing mechanism’ system, now dynamically being geared away from over-materialism, to needed planet caring and human caring directions --- ? And hope too, springing eternal - ?

Still, though, quite a way to go, ---- and good to start to get that ‘regeneration’ feeling -----

Good freerangin’ -----

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plus : various 'Freeranger' titles on 'books' page of 'Freerange Living' website