

DHARMA -- MY HEAD IN THE SAND

When I was a just a pup, well rather a teenager, the car I most wanted in the world was an Austin Healey 3000. Of course, I never had the money for one. Then, not too many years ago, a friend had one and asked me if I wanted to go for a ride in it. Of course I did. To my surprise, it was one of the bumpiest rides I have ever taken and probably was even so way back in the day, only then I couldn't care less. Today I care. LOL.

Perhaps the same idea holds true for my recent post-stroke sense of having lost my Self. The 'ride' after the stroke was very uncomfortable, even quite harsh. The moral of the story is that we get used to, even attached, to the comforts of our Self, either real or imagined.

Left to my Self or, rather, left to having "no- Self" was not at all cushy, even painful. I was used to the luxury glide of my pimped-out Self, whether real or imagined.

And so, I wonder what it was that I was surrounded by if my Self was vacated and just gone? And the only thing I could come up with is that, quite tautologically, I was surrounded by everything that was left other than my Self which was gone. Well, that's not saying much is it? And I had trouble getting used to being without the support of my Self.

Over time, this "not-Self" did appear refreshing, if only because it also felt pure or clean; and it was stone quiet. And I felt so much more authentic in its company and less full of BS. Well, that caught my attention and began to make up for the lack or loss of Self. Still, when I was not engaged in the present doing something and was just sitting around or "being there," I felt really awkward and uncomfortable, almost vulnerable; I felt that I stuck out like a sore thumb, not that there were any witnesses to this.

The point of all this was clear to me. I was a better “me” without all the BS and, yes, even without the Cadillac-like comfort of my old Self. Yet, when the music stopped (when I was not actively doing something) I had zero idea of what to do with myself. I wished I could just put a coin in the meter and park myself somewhere until it was time to do something active again.

Has it changed over time? Yes. Do I still feel like the odd-man-out when I am just sitting around? I do, but gradually less so. Am I retaining the purity and clean feeling. Some, but like all things new, they get old in time and the concept of the Self, by nature, is to make us as comfortable as possible (like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic), which means allowing, even encouraging, things that are a little over the top, as in “not exactly true.” And I, against my expressed wishes, seem to be complicit in that. It is hard to say no to comfort. LOL.

Well, as a result of all this medical stuff, for one I am forewarned, but I’m not sure about what. The economy of no-self (as less attachment) I can live with, even like. What hovers like a specter on the horizon is this (realization or worry) that it takes more than I’ve been giving to become realized or enlightened. I hate to carp on this, but there it is. My point is that if it takes having a stroke to get my attention, where have I been all my life and doing what? Fiddling while Rome burned? LOL.

And coupled with that thought is another, that everything is right here before us (and has been). It’s like the sun is in the sky and we can’t look at it, just as we cannot look directly into the physical sun without harm to our eyes. There is something like that going on here. Somehow, I can’t look directly at the true nature of the mind, not because it is hidden, but because I cannot stand to (or won’t) look directly at it. Like the ostrich, I put my head in the sand because the truth is too bright.

If that is the case (that it's me that ignores the obvious sun of the mind itself), what can I do about it? I like to imagine that I'm running as fast as I can, as they say, but obviously that's not true. My attention and awareness is just not cutting it. My little vacation from my Self makes this perfectly clear to me. And that resounds with a bit of a somber tone.

Speaking of which, and I don't mention it often, I have had quite a thorough training in western classical music. I don't have all the Bach Cantatas I once had (as in: all of them), but Cantata BWV 110 comes to mind as I write this, which is titled "Unser Mund sei voll Lachens," which translates to "May our mouth be filled with laughter." And in that cantata is the alto aria "Ach Herr, was ist ein Menschenkind"

*"Ah, Lord, what is a child of man
that you should seek his salvation with so much
pain?"*

Of course, the whole cantata is incredible. The particular aria I am pointing out that resonates to the tone of what I write here begins at 10:59 min into the cantata and lasts until 15:04 min for those who have the luxury of curiosity. I looked on YouTube for a version that I like, but Bach rarely left tempo markings and IMO the ones I found are all taking the tempo too fast for my taste. This one is better, but still not quite what I like. Give it a listen if you have that kind of time. The aria is only four minutes long.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICEy6ppkmP8>

[Photo by me.]

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[http://traffic.libsyn.com/spiritgrooves/Links to Michael Erlewine-V2.pdf](http://traffic.libsyn.com/spiritgrooves/Links_to_Michael_Erlewine-V2.pdf)

“As Bodhicitta is so precious,
May those without it now create it,
May those who have it not destroy it,
And may it ever grow and flourish.”