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Viveka-Zandtao

Exploring Quest

In the [practice of solitude](#) I determined a biggie for me:-

Solitude + Quest = Viveka

and yet I was only on [[RK p223](#)] of Bob Kull's solitude. I had continued with the reading as planned but exploring quest grew in me. Today I finally got rid of this reading - upadana to planning, and see that I should explore quest now.

To explore quest I need to review quest, what is QUEST for me? And that is no easy matter. It seems there should be a Pali word for quest – no Pali word no Theravada respectability (cynical humour ) so I searched – quested. I found none that I knew – I know little Pali. I tried to translate quest, aspiration, search etc, and got nowhere until I came to bodhisatta; yet I baulk at this word because it has a huge stamp of arrogance if I were to describe it of myself. It is the satta of bodhisatta that grabbed me. Bodhisatta is concerned with Buddhahood, enlightenment, nirvana and all such words that are way way way beyond me but satta is not. Quest is not satta for something but simply satta. Satta is quest, it is a state of mind that is path, that is determination, that is right effort (viriya) – doing the best I can but more.

Exploring quest here is exploring the “more”.

Artists have quest so I understand quest in Stephen’s “Art of Solitude”. Let’s examine an archetypal artist – Kirk Douglas’s Van Gogh (KDVG) in “Lust for Life”; I have no idea how accurate a depiction of Van Gogh this film is, I only wish to discuss what was portrayed. KDVG was indulgent, egotistical, lived life to the full, and was striven to paint. There was no choice in this; that is the key – no choice. Artists have no choice, there is no choice in their quest; they must create art. But the rest of their behaviour is not without choice. Life must be lived, why else are we here? But must life be lived with indulgence? Can artists live life in compassion? Can we live life in compassion? KDVG was driven by his quest for art but he allowed his ego to affect his quest by indulging in life. The quest lives life but it does not allow the ego to limit the living of life. Some artists claim this indulgence adds to their art yet art is concerned with connection to the Muse. Rather than adding to his art was KDVG's art limited by his ego? The quest lives life with discipline. To understand quest there has to be a living of life that has no ego. This is why solitude is such a good way of quest because being surrounded

by egos in daily life our own ego gets raised thus diminishing quest. How would we live in daily life with quest without meeting egos? A wonderful soul-destroying paradox of quest.

Bob Kull has quest so from now on in the reading of his solitude I intend to explore quest. "I feel I'm still in spiritual hiding, crouching out of the infinite eternal flow of existence; afraid to surrender to my fear and suffering, to vulnerability and death. And I'm also tight with fear not to. This long retreat into solitude could be my last opportunity: how far away can death be?" [[RK p221](#)].

When he speaks of "losing the light" [[RK p223](#)], I fear because this is trying to find the known, but when he talks of spiritual hiding I have hope for him because this is then a quest for the unknown. For each person the path is unknown. For the Buddha the 4NT was unknown – it was an insight gained under the Bodhi tree, but for everyone else the words of 4NT are dogma until study of these words (quest) leads to an understanding – an understanding that previously was not known. The path is the quest for the unknown –

learning. In my solitude I have become fortunate enough to have the time and situation where I can quest for the unknown.

Quest has been taken up by Hollywood through Indiana Jones and with less of Hollywood's glamour Tia Carrere's Relic Hunter - Sydney Fox and Michelle Yeoh's Touch. These quests are for relics and talismans, and in their quests these heroes alchemise into "superhumans" with skills necessary for quest. But quest is concerned with truth that is unknown – not talismanic such as Indie's Holy Grail, not a truth that is necessarily unknown to humanity but unknown for the person concerned. Boundaries of the unknown are pushed back through individuals becoming consciously aware of what had previously been unknown; when sufficient people are focussed on the path then collective boundaries are pushed back. In spiritual communities such as monasteries this unknown is learning to understand the meaning of scriptures, that is quest in community; in solitude the quest is not necessarily scripted, it is not people learning scriptural dogma. In solitude the guide is inner and has potential for newness; that is exciting – exploring the unknown. But to be honest and face ego, my unknown will be someone's scholarship. But the

quest is not about the vanity of human newness (ego), it is about the quest for the unknown – and the excitement is a fruit of dhammajati. That is more than enough. And because I am writing my duty is fulfilled, people can choose to read. So lucky!

To me it feels natural that in old age I write, this solitude feels so natural that my ego questions whether old people should still be activists - but ego does not need answering. It is not human to understand paths - that is for ego to fail to do, but life has a cycle that firstgrace does not interrupt - dhammajati. During life there are undulations of inner and outer - in my own life outer teaching and periods of centring solitude within my second childhood (second childhood is how I describe the gaining of experience as an adult after firstgrace), but overall isn't human life some form of birth, going out, then in, then death? Just asking, not for me to know. That is the sort of unknown that is not part of quest - limitations; I could feel there was no dhammajati fruit in that question.

At this stage my quest intention is going to be altered, I will address Buddhist

issues that come up; this might give me insight into Bob Kull's quest and then into quest in general as exploration. This also might be a diversion.

"Buddhism teaches that craving pleasure creates suffering. Something in me cries that life without pleasure would not be worth living. The pleasures I crave are so innocent and sensible: a morning cup of coffee; a cabin snug and sturdy in the storms; the warmth of a fire; seeing a friend or hearing the clear words of a teacher; the absence of pain; peace and freedom from craving.

"Each moment is a matrix of strong or faint cravings for or against something. How radical to think of being free from these. I doubt I know anyone who is seriously working to be free from all desire. Free from craving gross pleasures — lust, gluttony, hate — yes, but beauty? clarity? love? peace?" [\[RK_p223\]](#).

Tremendous! This is the sort of questioning that can only arise from situations like Bob Kull's solitude, there's a book in answering this quote alone. 4NT is concerned with path, craving and desire, it is about understanding needs and wants. Firstly there are desires that arise - I fancy

Thandiwe Newton. Is that a problem? No, it does not affect our daily lives because I don't know her or her family. Am I obsessed in any way? No. No craving. She is attractive and so much more, I fancy her – finished. Such a thought arises and goes away. Nothing wrong with desires that are let go as there is no craving.

Now there are needs, we need food and shelter to survive. Ed Wardle couldn't survive, conversely the food and shelter of the 1% are abominations. I have food and shelter – I pay my rent and weekly shop because of my needs. And I have a pension that enables this. Lucky – now, worked hard for it as a wage-slave. Coffee in the morning – desire. Too much coffee – addiction. Need for liquid – survival. Note the desire for morning coffee and move on – it is not a meaningful craving there is no obsession.

In daily life pain arises. Bob has pain because of his age and his need to work in solitude. As I get older there is increased pain of ageing. I accept this pain because it is natural. I look after my health, take preventative treatments, do the best I can. Pain arises, I live with it and let it go. But at my age it is not

wise to get into situations where pain can arise – natural limitation. Compassion brings pain, I let it go – discussed [here](#).

Quest is stronger than craving, if found it is natural, strength of nature and conviction. If there is no quest – no 100% dedication to the path, we are not being authentic which is our duty – [dhammajati](#). Quest is nature's law so it is not craving; craving comes from ego – attachment and conditioning. Quest – the path - includes clarity, love and peace. Need for teachers depends on your quest, if there is 100% dedication the need for learning takes priority and you make a decision about the need for teachers. In solitude you learn about your own specific needs for teachers. As for friends, solitude teaches you about how much they mean.

Part of taking refuge for monks is renunciation. In the vinaya the Buddha described discipline for a monk – as does an abbot describe their monastery's discipline based on the vinaya. The monk renounces to determine what is a need and what is wanted for themselves. At the end of a period of solitude there are decisions concerning needs and wants. As you slowly get sucked

back into society the conditioning makes you consume, and you decide against the consuming conditioning with your own needs and wants – that is the strength of the path; without the path where does such decision-making come from? Without renunciation there is no knowledge of your own attachments – your own understanding of needs and wants. Renunciation is a part of solitude helping you decide, only you can know your own truths – your own Noble Truths.

In Bob's quote there is a huge amount of stuff that needs unpacking. To put it all together and ask as a totality if anyone can be there trying to be free from desire is not constructive. The ego makes such a picture appear huge and unsolvable because the ego exists when the issues of Bob's quote are not resolved. Take the issues apart bit by bit, the egos are let go as you release the cravings, and desires are slowly got under control. The path does this, we are here to do that, to follow our paths. Being free from control by desire is something I work on, it is not out there as a huge unsolvable egoic problem, it is within my grasp one step at a time – letting go one step at a time.

I do not associate quest with desire, to be honest I see quest arising out of [MwB](#) in the same way as the 4 Dhamma comrades; I will be calling satta a new Dhamma comrade. Satta is quest, the Dhamma finding itself, when there is no ego that is all there is - path.

"In the rain, I felt heartache and longing (🚗 - for his mother), and then tenderness and care for the animals and plants who live here. Often, I just hack them out of my way, but when I remember that this is their home and I am a guest, I'm happier and more peaceful" [[RK p221](#)].

"Fishing links me deeply with land and sea; embeds me in the flow of the world. In receiving the gift of food, I feel profound gratitude for the Earth's generosity" [[RK p225](#)].

"To call fishing a sport is like calling gardening a pastime or church a social activity. On one level all three labels are accurate, but if it's nothing more to you, you've missed the heart of the matter — the place where you are no longer only you but part of something greater" [[RK p226](#)].

He is far more connected to the Earth than I am – I know I am disconnected

at my age I don't think I could ever become connected. On this I accept being led – indigenous-led. "My emotions seem to cycle with the weather, as though there's no buffer between the world and me" [RK p229]. Proof.

And then "Even after years of meditation, I don't seem to have a stable place inside" [RK p229]. What is the stable place? We follow dhammajati, follow the quest - path. There is the characteristic - anicca (impermanence), is there a stable place (permanence)? Isn't accepting change stable? Bob, are you trying to control what is not meant to be controlled?

I'm being unfair – too much detail on a throwaway content in a journal that he cannot counter, and if I keep doing that the Viveka will never end. As with Stephen I must not focus on Buddhist disagreement but only where it is relevant to quest. But it's interesting to respond. "Sometimes, I actually experience that there is no outside or inside, that the weather and my feelings are a continuum, that the world is not, cannot be, against me since there is no separation between us. I am the wind and rain. In those moments I feel peace and joy" [RK p229]. Responded. "Cognitive, emotional, and spiritual ups and

downs are all part of the journey” [\[RKp230\]](#). Nailed.

The interlude [\[RK_pp231-245\]](#) reminded me very much of justifying admin I had to do for my own M Ed. Obviously Bob wanted some academic respectability for his solitude, maybe they funded him? It is a reminder of what I don't wish to engage with - that discipline; stick to solitude. He wanted his retreat to provide some sort of knowledge about solitude – perhaps he had done groundwork for this.

I loved this quote especially in an academic context:-

"The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.
— ALBERT EINSTEIN " [\[RK_p231\]](#).

"My explorations in solitude are a continuing process of personal transformation that opens me more directly to the mysterious unknown” [\[RK p232\]](#). I have just come up with quest as exploring the unknown, and then

read this ratification. Pleasing.

On meditation and solitude he wrote this “Meditation, for me, is a powerful means to stabilize the intense psychoemotional roller coaster that can develop in the absence of community. Because maintaining mindfulness in a social environment is difficult, solitude can be a powerful spiritual tool. I find that, with few distractions, my mind naturally slows and deepens even without strong self-discipline.” [[RK p243](#)]. There are several interesting aspects of this. When I was young and going into solitude, I felt the psycho-emotional rollercoaster especially just after [firstgrace](#) in the Belgian cottage. But now the opposite happens. From the stability of solitude mixing with people can produce a high esp if someone talks near the path. I then have a tendency to become effusive, and can blow people over with a path onslaught; this is a mindfulness I have difficulty with. As Bob says solitude is an easy way of going deep. Because of the way I do it there is always the TV distraction. This makes me more nesh, can pass time when I am tired after writing or studying, and it makes my solitude less intense. When I think of retreats without TV there was an intensity I don't have, but in truth I am close to a

good balance with this as I am finding it hard to find TV that is not blatant conditioning. Warts-&-all football esp at the moment is perhaps the best TV balance but there is pointless emotion there.

Whenever I give a description that contains complacency, I counter with a complacency strategy. There is path and ego, I know this, so warts&all is ego. There are 3 steps I work on to lessen upadana - 1) Humility - humble heart 2) Ending 4 upadanas - kama, ditthi, silabatta, attavada 3) Grounded in nature under a tree. More balance but still upadana - some complacency.

"In solitude I'm released from the immediate tangle of the social web and free to explore other levels of existence. I have the opportunity to relax and experience myself as part of the rhythms of nature" [[RK_p245](#)]. In my solitude I have no social web except social media, and that doesn't interest me greatly as there is very little depth; on fb it appears that memes of deep teachings are bandied about as badges of awareness yet does deep enquiry follow from this? My version of solitude only touches on immersion in nature – too nesh, I see the birds and tokays far more than people; having spent a

good deal of my retirement maintaining token relationships with MAWPs this doesn't concern me. My rhythms are not too natural. This points to life gravitating towards quest for me.

"One challenging aspect of using mindfulness and solitude as method is the question of who is doing the exploring and who is being explored. As far as I can tell, these nodes of experience never hold still. In waiting and listening for insight into the nature of the mind/body process, the mind/body process changes. Neither the viewing scope nor what's under the scope holds still" [\[RK p245\]](#).

This reminds me of Fritjov Kapra's light waves (point or momentum depending on viewpoint) in "Tao of Physics", probably now some form of dilemma in the quantum arena. At first inspection I see no dilemma because of anatta and anicca; there is only Dhamma. No I and nothing permanent means there is just observing. The question of who is observing comes from the self, because of anatta the Dhamma just observes itself.

On [\[RK pp238\]](#) Bob gave a description of his mindfulness meditation, for me it contains no bhavana – mental development. Nor does his approach speak to me of quest but the description lacks details. He mentioned Jack Kornfield who learnt with Buddhadasa at one stage. [MwB](#) starts with the breath and has a structure of development of 4 foundations of mindfulness. The breath is what you start with and then develop, the breath is not where you finish. The details are in MwB and some approaches in the Companion, staying with the breath is one thing but when the mind wanders it can be controlled and be constructive leading to an understanding of the 4 foundations – Buddhist mind. There are stages of learning with meditation that are beyond knowing the breath – the first tetrad of MwB. Bob, is there bhavana in our meditation?

Two more books to think about – [Hermits](#) by Peter France, and [Solitary walker](#) – Jean Jacques Rousseau - not discussed. During my PGCE I was a romantic Rousseauophile, by romantic I mean I never read him; I wrote one of my papers on him talking about back to nature and the tutor knew – told me in the pub!!! This encourages me to look at Hermits "But Hermits, with its strong call to silence and humility, is touching me. Pouring all that happens

into words — as though everything is of great importance — seems arrogant” [RK_p258] – the silence and humility. No arrogance – writing is path and therefore dhammajati – duty. Sometimes the frustrated I screams out I am better than the MAWPs, why aren’t more people hearing me? And as soon as I feel that, I know I need meditation and humility. As soon as there is frustration – failed desire, or as soon as there is better – egoic comparison, I know there is self and a weakness straying from anatta. But to write, to express what little I know of the path, this is just duty – no more, no less, no evaluation. Path means duty – giving back. Just do it. Is it good or worthwhile? That is not for me to judge, there is no choice in the matter. Just like eating, it has to be done. Bob, just write.

My having said that there is this:- "On my first long wilderness retreat I wrote nothing until the final week and then only some short poems. Perhaps that retreat was so powerful because I didn’t anchor myself in language-based consciousness by writing” [RK_p258]. Is there anchoring? No doubts, there are – there are times in meditation when wanting to write arises; to help with this I have a notebook. Whatever is in the notebook must get written or I

won't trust the process. Am I anchored, are there states I could go to? Maybe. But my path is writing, I trust it. Am I missing out on states? Maybe, but I trust the writing path – it will show me if it wants to. But there are different paths; perceiving writing as the anchor in intellect (language-based) spurred Bob on – good for him. But the path doesn't have to be about experiencing states; if you want them you might get them when they are not the path? Is the quest about states? Yes and no. It is about developing an improved mental state - bhavana, but quest is not concerned with bells and banjoes - moved on from that with upekkha (equanimity).

"During the day I can be philosophical about pain as part of life, but at night when I actually hurt, I have no reserve of stoic equanimity" [[RK p264](#)]. Pain and suffering is an important issue for quest. My own wage-slavery was easier than most; it contained some truth in that good education is compassion, and even though education is controlled by the corporate paradigm ([Matriellez](#)) there is some good education – only some. As with all work the body pays, physical work far more than others; my own gave me GERD through stress. I must be fair, I have a hereditary heart condition, and I

suspect that condition affects my metabolism which then affects GERD. So nature and labour gave me GERD. I consider I am very lucky with my pain and suffering, in work you muscle through focussing on the work to lose consciousness of many small pains, often forcefully burying health conditions that need treatment. In ageing solitude you are more conscious of health. My day is greatly disturbed when I wake up with bile in my mouth or bile near my heart. Fortunately sitting in my comfortable chair I can usually sleep if I put on a mind-numbing escapist movie – or sometimes an intense British drama.

There is neshness in the above description but I am not whining. Reflux is a real pain, it is not a serious pain, it can be handled – I won't take BigPharma's answers as I think that makes the reflux worse long-term. Nature handles it together with acupuncture and some herbal medicine. I used to drink an ACV, water and honey mixture that would stop it, however that has stopped working. I suspect my choice of treatment increases the pain in the short term but I don't know, and have absolutely no desire to experiment with antacids – they are medicine for when I am dying.

Decisions about pain and suffering are more detailed in solitude, when you have pressures and responsibilities from family and the job you must become stoic and fight through it. In solitude you experience the pain as it is - recognising that the stoicism contributed to the pain you have in age. I admire so much what Bob Kull did but at his age I had already retired – retiring at 54. I don't think I will have as many years as many but I know that retiring at 54 I gave my body so much more of a chance of enjoying retirement – or at least enabling me to have a retirement journey in solitude with minimal pain. Bob had to know that what he was doing was going to give him pain. Around p264 he discusses his shoulder restricting sleep, when teaching I was always sleep-restricted but stoically dealt with it causing stress – paying for it now. In ageing sleep is so much more important and so much harder to rely on – at least in my case. If I had reflux and could go back to sleep, then get up and write as normal, there would be no issue. The pain and suffering is about restricting the path – writing, it is not about the pain (discomfort) itself.

What pain, suffering and ageing has made me accept is that in my solitude

one day is not the same as the next. I have no routines, and shamefully it has added to my disconnectedness because I would love to rise with the dawn and the birds and sleep when the night descends with the cicadas. Instead I sleep when I can – not always in bed, and hope my meditation happens. With increased solitude I am able to increase meditation sessions if I choose, but it is better having a good night's sleep and then getting up to meditate. My fallback plan of entering a monastery looks harder and harder with these ageing restrictions of sleep.

What I am really getting at is that there is pain and restriction. When I feel the pain I am close to a wreck – not snivelling. Whilst I target returning to the stool I cannot get on the stool and relieve the pain through the power of my mind and meditation. I understand that this is what some meditators try to do but it is not for me. Should I be a stoic on the stool as I was a stoic during work? Should is not a good word, and such stoicism is not for me; without guilt I will add this neshness to warts&all. I am getting older, there is pain and restriction.

The dreaded Maggie was active until she was 77 (wiki) and famed for saying she only required 3 or 4 hours sleep. Sadly later in life she suffered from Alzheimer's, I think they were connected. I was proud to carry a Thatchcard which said that if I was on my death bed she could not visit as she represented most of what I disagreed with in life. I raise her because she as with many politicians was active far beyond any time for activism I might consider. There is wisdom in old age, it saddens me in the West how little this is respected. But for the old why are they required to live like the young if they are going to contribute? Nature asks of the young to seek out the old, not for the old to be figures on a public stage. Whilst they have wisdom, do they have the sampajanna that enables them to think on their feet? It is so unnatural. My heart might not even allow me to get on a plane, if Covid ever did.

I need to develop quest to cope with the erratic routines of physical pain. My writing and meditation cannot be connected to time of day. Pain has to be allowed and then dedication to quest must take over when there is no pain or lack of sleep. Quest must change my approach in which I still relate to routine

in ways that work required of me - clinging to conditioning.

Doing Buddhism again – discipline? “I think surrender and obedience — although not spoken of in those terms — are also central to Buddhist meditation practice. In remaining still, without grasping or aversion (nice dream), we are obedient to the moment, to how things actually are right now. In accepting things just as they are and not as we would like them to be, we surrender self-centered will. In keeping Suzuki-roshi’s “beginner’s mind,” we remain humble in the face of the unknowable.

"Ah, but ...words. It's easy enough to grasp these ideas conceptually, what's hard is moment-by-moment practice" [[RK_p271](#)].

Buddhism talks of 3 refuges, Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha. A requirement of the monastery is to obey the abbot's interpretation of Vinaya, outside the monastery there is no such restrictions and you can surrender to the Dhamma, obey [dhammajati](#) and follow your path; as Bob says accepting the way it is and not grasping at ego or accepting delusion – accepting that which is not Dhamma. These are not simply words but a description of wisdom. Are these

insights for you or are they words for your intellect? That is your choice, your understanding, whether it is wisdom or passing intellect. Moment-to-moment practice is of course hard. Buddhadasa talks of 4 Dhamma comrades arising from [MwB](#), one of which is sampajanna – wisdom-in-action. Wisdom arises and is practised through sampajanna as a consequence of bhavana – mental development in the 4 foundations of mindfulness. This is why I like sampajanna so much especially for westerners who have been so miseducated with intellectual ego. If the rational is prioritised as intellect then I am reminded of Albert's quote earlier. It is known therefore it is a choice.

"Seeing through the illusion of self/ego is the only way to true peace and happiness. But if we claim that, then most Christian mystics were and are misguided, because they believe in an eternal individual soul that must surrender to God's Will. In both cases the key to peace, joy, and love is to give up a self-centered worldview" [[RK p279](#)]. Hindus also believe in atman that reincarnates. Seeing through the illusion of self/ego is seen as anatta in Buddhism – anatta, no atta, no self. There is such an amazing contradiction for Buddhists that they see the 3 characteristics of Buddhism as anatta,

dukkha and anicca, and yet many Buddhists accept reincarnation – an idea of a reincarnating self. Perhaps such intellectual contradictions of belief don't matter if in daily practice self is given up, probably depends on how tightly you grasp the ditthupadana and the belief that gets in the way of letting go of the self.

Quest is not concerned with ego. Quest is path, and ego detracts from path. Quest is not conditioning, it is beyond conditioning - a quest for the unknown and not a form of survival or societal conformism. Quest as satta arises as a Dhamma comrade from MwB, any self or ego detracts from connection to Dhamma. Are souls or atman connected to quest? For some, perfecting as part of the cycle of samsara might be considered quest - a quest for perfection. This requires belief in reincarnation. I feel belief is a restriction, let go of restriction and allow whole being to connect to Dhamma. Is that quest - whole being connecting to Dhamma? Needs reflection. No reflection needed I was just tired – it is just 100% dedication.

This brings together consideration of faith and faith in relation to quest.

Belief is consciousness attached to a set of ideas – ditthupadana. Yet we have complete trust in the path – 100%. There cannot be any consciousness attaching to belief so faith has no belief. Trusting in the path has no description of path, it is just trust in path – in Dhamma – being path or Dhamma. Once we describe we are creating ideas, attaching consciousness to Dhamma so it is not 100%. As for atman it is a belief unless someone knows for certain. This is not to say there is not some form of reincarnation, that requires knowledge either way, unless there is knowledge it is a belief – a reduction of the 100%.

This was all clarified by consideration of quest this morning. Quest is 100%-dedication, anything less is not 100% - a tautology, yet at the same time it clarifies that anything that is not quest, is not path, is not Dhamma. No reduction, no ego.

The 4 Dhamma comrades are states that arise from MwB, the more you meditate “properly” the more these states develop, the more egos and conditioning you clean away the more these states develop. The same is true

of satta – the state of questing, it arises out of meditating – connecting to Dhamma. The word quest as a noun tends to require an object of “quest for”, and that object is the unknown. Satta as the state of questing gives me some clarity, and that is all that matters – satta and the quest for the unknown, two aspects of quest.

With recognising the state of satta it felt like the Belgian cottage. At the cottage there was just satta and irrelevant books. There was no newness for the world but it was new for me – pure learning as it was learning driven by the inner guide and from connection. I was immature for a 23-year-old, and I was just learning through writing but the state of mind was pure – it was satta. After living life and the centring summer I have now found satta again, the state of questing, the pure enquiry – Adyashanti, enquiry for enquiry’s sake. A quest for the unknown, Dhamma getting to know itself – purpose.

Quest includes enquiry. What I took from Adyashanti is an enquiry that does not accept anything – the *don’t make any assumptions* of the [4 Agreements](#). But this is an enquiry concerning the known, eg is the fake news of Donald

Trump true? If we get out of the post-truth era symbolised by Trump, do we want to return to the neoliberalism of the liberals that also accepts exploitation of nature, war and people? Or do we want to accept indigenous-led? This enquiry (the enquiry I recall from Adyashanti) is used to remove conditioning, but quest is an enquiry into the unknown not of the known – what is beyond conditioning for the individual; maybe even pushing back the boundaries of the collective known. Quest is satta, a state of mind, it matters not to satta whether the unknown is actually "not known by humanity".

[Adyashanti note – I looked at Adyashanti for a while and remember enquiry from studying him, enquiry as questioning all. I do not know whether his enquiry took him into the unknown – quest; I hope it did but I just don't know. It is unlikely I will read him to confirm as that is academy, and as there is no desire on my part to limit or misrepresent what Adyashanti said – study him, your path is up to you.]

In solitude there is no identity. One could imagine a child growing up in solitude not knowing their race, and just assuming that all have their gender.

Adults going into solitude would leave identity behind as memory as identity has nothing to do with living alone. In solitude all races can follow their path, and the paths will be both the same and different as any path - not having any causal relationship to identity. Knowing we are born with compassion shows that racism arises with conditioning, in solitude the path can be followed with no reference to conditioning – this again shows that racism is a product of the development of ego that is part of conditioning. Eckhart in the [first part of this discussion](#) with Russell laid out a very clear understanding of conditioning and identity. Because in solitude we can see very clearly that identity arises from societal conditioning it does not lessen the suffering caused by racism. "It's not the writing, itself, that's the problem (if there is a problem), but thinking beforehand about what I'll write, and mentally describing to myself what I'm seeing and feeling. When I do that I'm not really here in solitude, but in an imaginary future where someone else (even if it's only a future me) is reading my descriptions. In this way, I cling to my social identity through interaction with other people, instead of seeking a deeper identity as part of the universe or in relationship with God" [[RK p279](#)]. Writing can be just writing. If the journal was tied to funding or had

publishing conditions that restricted the writing then that affects the relationship between writing and the path.

As this is now about quest I am recording Bob's description of his quest with no attempt at unpicking "I've always placed great value on insights, but in some sense they're a dime a dozen. They come and they go. I long for understanding and wisdom, but no longer know what I'm seeking. If all is transient, including clarity and peace, then what is there to seek? I feel peace, love, and gratitude flowing over me at times, but no sense of a Supreme Being. And I still have no idea what my soul is. There are thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and — though Buddhism says it's an illusion — a sense of I, but what is the soul? What does it look or feel like? How does it manifest itself to me?" [RK_p282]. Unpicking some himself:- "I saw clearly today that I have a strong goal in being here. And that — in some sense — is just the problem. Goal-oriented behavior — the whole notion of progress and getting somewhere — is one of the things screwing up our culture. Paradoxically, the place I'm trying to get to is right here: fully experiencing each day as meaningful in and of itself" [RK_p282]. "I finally surrendered and

felt myself opening into a peaceful space of stillness. Again I see how misguided are my efforts to “get” somewhere. I’m already here. There is nowhere else to go. The aliveness I seek is everywhere; I’m always in it and it in me, even though I often don’t experience it consciously. Trying to get somewhere else psychologically only removes me further into a conceptual dreamland” [\[RK p285\]](#).

Quest is not goal-oriented, it is quest for unknown. When I chose the word satta as quest, I took it out of the context of bodhisatta (enlightenment). In quest as I see it this (bodhi) is not a required goal; if there is anything that arises which remotely resembles these wonders there will be gratitude, but never will they be target? But I do have to be careful with quest. Bob’s points about goals are valid, his point about living in the now is even more valid.

Describing satta as a Dhamma comrade could be ego, but having doubts could also be ego. No, no doubts. I felt the fruits of [dhammajati](#), that is verification. But there needs to be greater clarity. Good questioning, there does need to be a clearer understanding. But getting somewhere is not quest,

satta is opening up to learning new; that is a state. Bob writes living in the now as all there is, but that does not mean there is no quest - openness to learn about the unknown. More than openness, determination and dedication. Bob's quest and his answers to his quest are not my answers, they are pointers that might help my inner guide decide. I have no wish to analyse Bob's quotes in terms of his path - how can I know? Bob's quest and dilemmas are his, I will only use them as pointers in resolving my own enquiry - no judging.

"This evening, an inner light shone up from within, and a voice called, "Come to me, trust me, depend on me. You cannot do it yourself. You're trapped where you are, and your struggling efforts to free yourself enmesh you more deeply. Come to me." "Yes," I answered, and surrendered. Yet my pride was soon fighting back. This is the work I came to do" [[RK p289](#)].
Fruits of [dhammajati](#) – Bob's verification. Excellent.

Good for you, Bob. "My heart opens and I am flooded with peace and love. Yes. Clarity of mind is not enough without love" [[RK p291](#)].

“but am offended by some of Cat’s behaviors? I think it has to do with a sense of ownership. He is, in some sense (at least in my mind), mine and should do as I wish him to do. This is a problem in all my relationships” [RK p298]. I don’t have cats now. In my first house here in Thailand cats came had their kittens who mostly died and drove me to distraction. At one time I had dogs here for protection from burglary. Two puppies were too noisy, I gave one away. The other was OK but when I moved to the countryside he went out of control, chased bitches and motor-bikes. Now I don’t need dogs, my landlord has made some nasty dogs that protect. There was a plan to have a kitten but then I realised if it didn’t behave the way I wanted there would be battles. I don’t want battles in my home. Even cats and dogs disturb my serenity.

As for people I always wanted control for the way I lived, not the way they lived but I lived. I wanted to live a certain way that was conducive to my spiritual life, this was increasingly so as I get older. I never found any respect for my spiritual life but in truth the relationships I had were never about

spirit; my life was about spirit but the relationships weren't. I then required some control in relationship to enable spirit, and this never happened. In the end I sought only relationship concerning spirit, but that was a pipedream and I gave up.

I did not like myself when I became controlling. I couldn't let it be and still be spiritual so I tried to control. It didn't work because spirit was not understood especially as a fundamental of the relationship was lost – a contradiction – lust and spirit. So I gave up and all that awful controlling has gone. Accepting solitude avoids any of that, but sometimes it feels like I have avoided. Should I be better and not controlling? Why couldn't I tolerate and still be spiritual? These are the teachings. But they are not teachings that I could make work. It just feels all that has gone and has no relevance to my life now. Is it a weakness I didn't learn not to be controlling? It really doesn't feel so. It could be that quest and controlling cannot happen together, it could be that there is no quest whilst at the same time being controlling.

How much of that controlling is ego? None now, but then? When I think of

monasteries I just think it wouldn't work because there would be an abbot in control of me. I couldn't accept that unless I had no choice – my last financial resort. Is it path or ego that says I have my way of living? I question not being able to follow my path, and why an abbot wouldn't allow it. Yet the abbot sees ego in westerners. No matter how great they are I don't understand how Ajaan Chah allowed a scramble to wash his feet – Jack Kornfield described this in his book "After the ecstasy the Laundry" - can't find the page. And as for HHDL, how did he allow his people to prostrate themselves across Tibet on pilgrimage to Lhasa and Potala palace? I don't understand. These ways of service are dedicated and not ego, but they are not path either because they are not human. If I had agreed to the situation I would do what was required without complaint – but would resentment show? Is ego there when the situation has been avoided? I think not. I don't think ego lies in wait to pounce, it has to express itself. If the situation leads to controlling behaviours the ego comes back, but if there is no situation there is no ego. No cats and dogs and relationship, no ego.

“feel I somehow own myself and have the right to control what I do and feel

and what happens to me. From there it follows that the world is mine to do with as I wish. But I didn't make me, nor do I own me or the world. I'm just part of the flow of existence" [RK p296]. There is no I to own, there is no me to possess as mine, I am just part of the flow of existence. But within that flow there is duty – dhammajati. Nature and society has conditioned so that there are egoic attachments, this means that I, ego, have taken from the flow; it is my duty to give it back by removing attachments. Quest follows from being part of this flow, it is not an egoic search but just satta as part of the flow of Dhamma. I do not quest. Quest is duty that arises from removing the ego, an accepting that it is just flow of existence – Dhamma.

“Many of us seem to sacrifice our spiritual, emotional, and psychological health to be: a better scientist, politician, businessman, lover, soldier, environmentalist, spiritual seeker. Self-sacrifice for what we love is our cultural ideal, but I wonder. Is such behavior just ego-tripping and escape from existential angst?” [RK p301]. To me this is upside down. To follow our paths, to be authentic, to be who we are meant to be, we align all the ducks of mind, psyche and body with spirit, we align the 5 khandhas with spirit. There

is sacrifice and not. Once aligned there is no sacrifice because it is natural – dhammajati. There is self-sacrifice because part of the alignment is letting go of self and ego – anatta – sacrificing self. In doing this we embrace the purpose of our existence, if there is angst it is compassion – seeing the suffering of others for not following their paths.

“Merton has gotten under my skin. I’m reading Solitude: A Philosophical Encounter by Philip Koch, and he quotes Merton at length: “The hermit’s whole life is a life of silent adoration. His very solitude keeps him ever in the presence of God....His whole day, in the silence of his cell, or his garden looking out upon the forest, is a prolonged communion.

“This was written by a man who either had his head up his ass or was bullshitting the public” [RK_p302]. I laughed at Bob’s admitted getting “it out of my system for the moment” [RK_p303]. For me there is increased connection in solitude because it lacks the diversions and distractions of daily life. Would that there were always presence for me but my mind and heart are not wandering all over the place. There is distraction, as I write I will check the email, look for downloads – even waste time on facebook, and use

tiredness as an excuse for TV: warts&all. I accept this as balance but as always in such discussion of balance I must examine complacency. I don't want any sanctimony to be seen in my solitude, solitude helps find and live with the path – it is a way of *doing the best I can* ([4 Agreements](#)). No permanence, no prolonged communion for me, just a better way. The place to go for balance is deeper. If there is wandering it is ego. Solitude enables going deeper but if in solitude we are still stuck in ego then solitude probably exacerbates egoic wanderings.

My ego keeps throwing spiritual bypassing at me to create doubt about solitude. In such times of global strife I am hiding in solitude, the ego tells me. This is a weakness - I have always wanted to do more; and then the wonderful Greta comes along to shame me even more – I wish spellcheck wouldn't keep changing her name to Great it's even more of a slight. *Now you are going to tell me about the writing no-one reads*, hammers the ego. It is this writing activism I cling to – clinging is not a word I like. But pathivism has the knowledge and conviction that going deeper and following your path is what nature intended, and this Dhamma will provide the answers

for all. Trust the path, trust the Dhamma, and don't trust the doubts the ego throws up.


But this ego is one I cannot get rid of because it is an ego that comes from compassion; the more compassion that comes from MwB the more one sees what needs to be done, and the greater the chance for ego to come in and create doubt. But without delusion (make a difference), when I look at what can be done then I know I can only trust the path – have the faith (without belief) in nature. This ego is recurrent for me, the answer is always the same and true despite the sameness, but it does disturb. This ego has come up more with quest, why am I questing with climate crisis and BLM; British footballers take the knee, no more Washington R, the 1% throw out smokescreens, do nothing, and more troops taking away the liberty of protest might mean more Trump. These white people bring me shame but that is also ego creating doubt and misusing identity.

We should not be afraid of these egos and doubts, they are checks and balances to help with complacency. Maybe the great spiritual teachers, Thay,

Eckhart, Buddhadasa, don't have doubts, don't have egos, or maybe they present a strength for us to respect and strive for. Maybe they don't have warts, that is not for me to judge; I am not ashamed that I have warts&all, with humility I just keep balancing *doing the best I can* – [4 Agreements](#).

I had a major insight concerning faith and grace today, and it throws everything up in the air. Amongst others, how does faith relate to 100% engagement? I keep thinking “what do I do now?”, and the answer I come up with is “have faith”. So the I that is asking “what do I do now?”, how much of that is ego? Faith now tells me it is all ego, and to let it go.

Review note - This major insight or revelation was very important, however it was more than faith involved. I realised this during investigating faith - the next section. You can continue to read Viveka-Zandtao as if this important revelation was just faith, or you can read [Appendix B - Review Note on Faith](#) where I explain what else was involved. I don't wish to mislead anyone so I have written the review note but it is not necessary to understand the difference until faith is investigated. But the choice is yours. I will include a

link to this review note elsewhere - again it will be your choice to "jump the gun". So this awareness of faith also brings writing into question, at least the way writing happens. Blitzing the writing and putting it online risks ego. That has to change because of potential spiritual mistakes - more than potential . Hopefully in time there will be certainty that all writing is coming from Dhamma. There is connection with the muse but ego found a way in. There needs to be circumspection – and review. This is worth expanding on. There are two types of writing - Wai Zandtao Scifi and Zandtaomed Advice, both are completely different. When writing scifi, the connection to the muse can just flow, because it is a story and it is about the conditioned world; having ego in Wai Zandtao is not necessarily a mistake - still needs reviewing. But with Zandtaomed Advice the writing can flow but if ego comes in there will be mistakes. When writing Zandtaomed it is necessary to ask, in this advice is there benefit to ego? That is the filter necessary for reviewing Zandtaomed.

Faith has developed because of quest. As I developed satta faith just grew and grew, have faith in the path – not beliefs just faith. Have faith in the Dhamma, understand the teachings but not have faith in the words of the teaching. And

faith took over filling me with presence, grace, the grace of sunnata. It was powerful – no going back from this. (Remember [review note on faith](#))

The faith is so powerful it is making me want to question, and that is throwing my patterns of behaviour into doubt. It is entering into a phase of questioning of whether it is the Dhamma that does and how much ego does.

When there is faith there is no need to indulge in the conditioning of conditionedworld. Compare dogworld. Have you seen dogworld? Dogs live in and out of our lives but dogs just see what dogs do in their world – dogworld. No matter how much they work for us, how well they are trained, dogs live in dogworld which is part of nature. All humans are subject to conditioning although some following the path move beyond that conditioning. This conditioning makes conditionedworld, and in this world humans live lives as a result of conditioning; even though conditionedworld is also part of nature. The path, trust in the path, faith in the path, helps us see this, be part of nature and see through conditionedworld.

Being in natureworld is a different perspective, we just follow nature – [dhammajati](#). Natureworld has its own laws, and concerns for all species. Conditionedworld ought to fit in with all the concerns of natureworld, the laws of nature, but it does not so conditionedworld will suffer. Conditionedworld is suffering – the 4NT, but is the way that conditionedworld is suffering hurting nature? Climate issues, resource exploitation, water pollution, pipelines are all affecting nature, and nature will not allow itself to be destroyed.

Despite what some/many egoic humans think conditionedworld is not above nature, civilisation itself is not required by nature. If the world of nature is going to be adversely affected by conditionedworld then nature will intervene causing natural disasters such as pandemics. Because of the way conditionedworld is we are at risk, and best survival happens by following the laws of nature and changing conditionedworld to fit in with the way nature is. This needs to be human priority, or civilisation will suffer. Civilisation needs to be brought into harmony with nature – if possible.

Theosophy says there is no wisdom higher than truth, and theosophy sees itself as some kind of common core of religions. One core of religions is faith with different religious people having different mixtures of faiths and beliefs. Faith that has no belief is a common core - different religions adding to this common core of no-belief faith. The spiritual way of life and the religious way of life overlap when followers find faith by eschewing the egos that arise from the clinging of ditthupadana and silabattupadana - belief systems and rituals.

The power of this faith insight made me investigate, and the area that has not been entered before is sotopanna – stream-entry because stream-entry for me was always considered in some way beyond me. I do not believe dogma but investigate it. For the arahant there are 10 fetters and for the stream-entry 3 of these apply ([wiki](#)):-

“Three fetters

Both the Sangati Sutta (DN 33) and the Dhammasangani (Dhs. 1002-1006) refer to the "three fetters" as the first three in the aforementioned Sutta Pitaka

list of ten:

1. belief in a self (sakkaya-ditthi)
2. doubt (vicikiccha)
3. attachment to rites and rituals (silabbata-paramasa)

According to the Canon, these three fetters are eradicated by stream-enterers and once-returners.”

Comparing these fetters with my own observations, first a big thing happened – finding faith in the Dhamma - no belief in a self; stream-entry? Sakkaya-ditthi – what do I do now? Faith says let I go. There is faith complete trust in the Dhamma – no doubt, no vicikiccha, and even though I have used the 4 upadanas before it is the first time I have used silabattupadana. Whilst I have in the past rejected discussions of the nature - have I entered the stream? – it is now time to consider sotopanna because my experience matched the description. But if it is sotopanna, it is not the sotopanna that is full of belief and ditthi in [this talk](#). (Remember [review note on faith](#))

This faith started with quest, questing – satta, questing for the unknown. Now

the unknown has a word that I have used before – atammayata; the quest is atammayata-satta. There was a word I came across similar to atammayata, asankhata – the unconditioned – the unfabricated. Let's examine atammayata and its 3 prongs:-

- 1) No concocting ayatana
- 2) No conditioning
- 3) No attaching to positive or negative.

This atammayata includes asankhata as the second prong, the conditioning of sanna and sankhara, but then ayatana concocts – rupa, and we can attach to the +ve/-ve – vedana. Bringing us to the khandhas, asankhata does not necessarily bring us to all the khandhas - only sanna and sankhara. Quest is atammayata-satta, removing I and mine from all of the 5 khandhas.

Is this quest for the unknown?

- 1) Concocting ayatana. Sense and sense-objects are known, concocting from

these known through cause and effect is likely to be a known concoction – new ayatana.

2) Sankhata – fabricating conditions that are known through the laws of cause and effect is also likely to be known conditions – new sankhata.

3) +/- is known (as +/-), through cause and effect they will become new vedana.

For the unknown quest moves beyond the 3 known prongs of ayatana, sankhata and vedana to atammayata.

In conditioned world money takes on importance in a spiritual context – in faith, because there is no wage for faith. There are wages for religions (donations – dana) that provide a function which is rites, rituals (silabbata-paramasa), and respite from fear; because religions provide these then those with faith and belief have some sort of income. But there is no wage for faith without belief, yet faith without belief is Dhamma without ego. Those with faith without belief need some money to survive but as an extreme of the negativity of employment there is no reward for this high human value. Employment defines what it rewards by how much it contributes to profit.

Wages are not rewarded for compassion, they do not reward love, they do not reward faith - although there are donations to faith with belief and ritual; there is no reward for authenticity. Essentially employment means reward for generating profit, survival and conditioning, and there is no reward for the path per se; there are some profits from publication and tours – merchandising spirit - but usually in special cases. Consideration needs to be given to our attachment to employment and what it does not reward. In employment do we as wage-earners develop the human faculties to appreciate the highest human values – the supramundane (I include faith without belief in the supramundane)? Because the system of wage-earning is concerned with profit from the sale of products and other economic concoctions, recognition of higher human values is not a faculty humans develop. People whose duty ([dhammajati](#)) takes them to the supramundane of the 4 Dhamma comrades, 4 Brahma-viharas, faith without belief have issues of survival because they have no money; such a system is perverse.

Initially faith is not a word I like for this state yet it is the word that first comes to describe the state – presence or grace that comes from feeling

absolute trust in the Dhamma. The term vicikiccha best describes it but as a word it has no power. No doubt, there is absolutely no doubt in the Dhamma. Faith – no doubt no belief no ditthi no self, just Dhamma. I would imagine this is what Patanjali meant when he wrote "to know God" – no doubt no belief no ditthi no self, just knowing God. What I don't like about the word is its associations especially with Christianity. Christians have faith but their faith seems to bring so much more. This Christian faith has no doubt but it has belief, ditthi, self, and a huge amount of division. In terms of Islam there is the vow "I bear witness that there is no God but Allah" – [movie Jinn](#), great division yet Kahlil Gibran's faith is unity; I feel there is similar unity with Sufism. Faith is a complex area, and whilst I feel like saying my current state is faith because of the power in the word maybe I will move away and try to use the Pali vicikiccha. Using upekkha I am moving back from the power - detaching from the power that arises with faith.

Since this vicikiccha (faith without belief) I have become focussed on upadana, and realised that there has been clinging. This faith without belief took me to ditthupadana and silabattupadana, and then made me ask

questions about the two other upadanas – kamupadana and attavadupadana. Do I have upadanas in my life has become a theme especially with regards to complacency?

I have been thinking about views – conservative and socialist – especially during this review of Viveka-Zandtao that was instigated by this faith - vicikiccha. The path goes beyond views, clinging to a view is ditthupadana. The MAWPs taught me that in reaction to them I was focussing on socialism, and by ending this ditthupadana path brought forward more compassion. But by considering upadana there is more that connects to socialism, I have begun thinking of it as a lifestyle allegiance. Ever since upheaval my self has been to some degree socialist beginning with anti-racism moving to socialism – even focussing on communism at one stage briefly. When I was politically active there was undoubtedly a socialist self, and since retiring and starting writing socialism and activism have been part of my writing. There is a clinging to this socialist way of seeing things, it is an upadana of socialist self – an allegiance to socialism based on my personal history. This attavadupadana has to change through becoming more conscious of upadana.

Action, sampajanna, has to come from the path - from compassion, and not as a result of prior allegiance to socialism and socialist views: not clinging to a ditthupadana of socialism and not clinging to attavadupadana, a sanna of personal history and lifestyle of socialist selves. From the outside this approach might not appear too different in terms of views, but from the inside it has to come from path without upadana. There also has to be a change in the way of writing in which the writing has to be mindful of upadana to the allegiance of a socialist lifestyle.

It is worth discussing here a confusion concerning ditthupadana. For me socialism always grew out of compassion. From compassion I personally judged the nearest ism that looked at freedom from suffering for all was socialism. However it is clear that socialism does not always have compassion, and no matter how much socialists claim that their non-compassionate behaviour was as a consequence of imperialist trade blockades or whatever analysis, the fact remains that socialist governments have demonstrated a lack of compassion when confronted with imperialism. I can only support socialism that is compassionate - not socialism per se. I would

support compassionate conservatism, but are there examples? That is a big question that I don't wish to discuss here, but it does lead me to say that Zandtaomed can work with compassionate conservatives.

"Sharing this experience of freedom with others is the only really worthwhile social contribution I can make." Completely agree. "But not everyone will choose the solitary path I'm following." Hopefully, more can find their own paths to follow. "There needs to be a way people can work with what's already happening in their lives" [RK p313]. Is that what is needed? For most, isn't what is happening in their lives conditioning or conditioned response? Isn't it about conformity to what is expected, and what is being expected not having any relationship to the path. Can people find the path when their lives are conditioned - what is already happening in their lives? However outer lives might not have to be changed for someone to follow their path. Make the decision to follow your path, make that the priority, and see how the path changes life.

"Perhaps I can encourage others, if I ever learn myself, to welcome the

darkness, difficulty, and fear. So far, I don't know how to find even my own way home, never mind showing the way to anyone else" [RK_p313]. If someone feels this, trust the path. Throughout the ego tries to get in the way – darkness, difficulty, fear, doubt about “finding my own way home”. Let go of these egos, and trust the path – the path knows what it is doing even on a “quest for the unknown”.

"I've known that for thirty years, but still struggle against the simple truth that things are what they are and not what I'd like them to be. Apparently, my resistance to accepting things as they are is one of the things that are what they are. Jeez, that sentence gives me a headache" [RK_p318]. Teal is big on resistance. I have always seen resistance as an ego so as with all egos don't attach and just let go. Accepting resistance as what is, accepting resistance as something that cannot change is accepting ego and conditioning as permanent. Trust the path and there is no resistance. Easier said than done but whatever is done to help us return to the path, that is the end of resistance.

It is necessary to know your own ways of getting back to the path, Bob has

one for sure – solitude, maybe there are others for him. But resistance is not permanent – not anicca, it is not tathata – the way it is; resistance arises as a response. Watch how it arises, see the pattern of its arising, and then let it go. What are the truths or teachings that create resistance? Note these truths and teachings. Examine the resistance to these truths and teachings in detail, find the detail in the resistance, focus in on the detail to understand the detail – understand the detail of the resistance. As you focus in deeper and deeper the resistance will disappear as the deeper you go the more you see there is no substance to the resistance; then without resistance you can see the truth in the teachings. It is easier to be trapped by resistance when the problem is considered "big", make the problem smaller, go deeper to understand, the problem gets smaller and disappears, And then eventually the bigger ego of resistance disappears as well. Go in and deep to understand.

“Suffering is the process of isolation.” Bam” [[RK_p318](#)].

To get at this Krishnamurti quote I searched and found this:-

“Chapter 5 'Aloneness and Isolation'”


"THE SUN HAS gone down and the trees were dark and shapely against the darkening sky. The wide, strong river was peaceful and still. The moon was just visible on the horizon: she was coming up between two great trees, but she was not yet casting shadows.

"We walked up the steep bank of the river and took a path that skirted the green wheat-fields. This path was a very ancient way; many thousands had trodden it, and it was rich in tradition and silence. It wandered among fields and mangoes, tamarinds and deserted shrines. There were large patches of garden, sweet peas deliciously scenting the air. The birds were settling down for the night, and a large pond was beginning to reflect the stars. Nature was not communicative that evening. The trees were aloof; they had withdrawn into their silence and darkness. A few chattering villagers passed by on their bicycles, and once again there was deep silence and that peace which comes when all things are alone.

"This aloneness is not aching, fearsome loneliness. It is the aloneness of being; it is uncorrupted, rich, complete. That tamarind tree has no existence other than being itself. So is the aloneness. One is alone, like the fire, like the flower, but one is not aware of its purity and of its immensity, One can truly communicate only when there is aloneness. Being alone is not the outcome of denial, of self-enclosure. Aloneness is the purgation of all motives, of all pursuits of desire, of all ends Aloneness is not an end product of the mind. You cannot wish to be alone. Such a wish is merely an escape from the pain of not being able to commune.

"Loneliness, with its fear and ache, is isolation, the inevitable action of the self. This process of isolation, whether expansive or narrow, is productive of confusion, conflict and sorrow. Isolation can never give birth to aloneness; the one has to cease for the other to be. Aloneness is indivisible and loneliness is separation. That which is alone is pliable and so enduring. Only the alone can commune with that which is causeless, the immeasurable. To the alone, life is eternal; to the alone there is no death. The alone can never cease to be.

"The moon was just coming over the tree tops, and the shadows were thick and dark. A dog began to bark as we passed the little village and walked back along the river. The river was so still that it caught the stars and the lights of the long bridge among its waters. High up on the bank children were standing and laughing, and a baby was crying. The fishermen were cleaning and coiling their nets. A night-bird flew silently by. Someone began to sing on the other bank of the wide river, and his words were clear and penetrating. Again the all-pervading aloneness of life."

Powerful stuff, in a couple of paragraphs there is . From K
"Loneliness, with its fear and ache, is isolation, the inevitable action of the self." This gives such clarity to "Suffering is the process of isolation". Ego and self (collection of egos) create separation, the separate ego as opposed to the unity of the path – of the Dhamma. Whether this loneliness arising from ego occurs within society or in your log cabin, it is the isolation that is caused by ego, the depressing loneliness on the opposite end of the spectrum to Viveka – spiritual aloneness. Such ego and self (collection of egos) cause

suffering, and as with 4NT letting go of the clinging (upadana) that causes egoic attachment ends the suffering. Suffering is a process of isolation rather than Viveka – aloneness – being the way to end suffering, the path to end suffering:-

| | |
|---|---|
|  | The Path to End Suffering |
|  | The Path that goes beyond Conditioning |
|  | The Path of Compassion Insight & Creativity |

There is no comment on the following quote except it self-evidently opens the door to Inner Child work – see Thich Nhat Hanh “[Reconciliation – Healing the Inner Child](#)”. "Tonight, when I got out the mirror for my weekly shave, I looked into my face and eyes, and felt sorrow and compassion for the hurt I saw there. Anger and rebellion hid a boy longing for his father's

approval, but receiving only harsh criticism. No wonder I'm a perfectionist — always hoping that if I do things well enough I'll finally feel loved and accepted. So much of my activity is driven by pain: if I can just do it right, I won't hurt anymore. The trap is that it works — temporarily. For a short time I do feel better, but then self-criticism sets in again and I need to accomplish something else — perfectly” [\[RK p322\]](#).

The following quote is included because it made me laugh about trusting the path. "I'm seldom here when it's calm, and I relaxed and bathed in the beauty of it all. How joyful if I could see such beauty in myself and in other people. I asked Spirit to guide me, and the reply came back, "What do you think is happening, moron?" A softer voice reminded me to trust the process” [\[RK p327\]](#).

“I often seem to feel “bad” after a spell of feeling “good.” Almost like coming down off a drug high. I first noticed it in Vancouver last year, driving home from meditation. Instead of having patience, I'd get instantly angry at other drivers who were in my way” [\[RK p328\]](#). Impatience around meditation

is something I have, it is connected with the meditation being incomplete – not enough. It usually occurs when meditation has not been regular, but not every time meditation has not been regular. It is tangled computer wires that does it most for me, shamefully I sometimes get irritated with inanimate objects. But once I see such a stupid irritation, I know it has nothing to do with the wires and I think about meditation – improving my resolve. This irritation will not happen when there has been a quality meditation, some kind of connection around the 4 tetrads. Yet if there has not been a connection doesn't imply there will be irritation. Such pointless irritation just means resolve to improve meditation. If I listen to this it's fine.

I can perhaps pinpoint my own irritations a little more. In the second tetrad of Buddhadasa's MwB on vedana there are 4 stages of piti, sukha, affects on the mind, and calming the mind. I have felt irritation when this tetrad has not been followed properly - although it can be "saved" at stage 9 (1st stage of tetrad 3) if I develop the supramundane states of the brahma-viharas. From a broader perspective (ie not considering details of my personal meditation method), if meditation does not release attachment to emotions then there is

still attached emotion, that attached emotion can be released as irritation in daily life. If irritation follows meditation then perhaps the meditation has not released attached emotion – maybe almost released it, and there is irritation because the path feels that "almost".

Quest for the unknown has limitations, the limitations of what humans are capable of knowing. Atammayata-satta needs to appreciate these limitations. This next quote began me thinking of limitations. "I've often said with pride that I believe in God/Spirit sometimes. That is, I directly experience a Presence sometimes, and when I don't, I no longer know if there is or is not God. Since direct experience is transient, I've thought that people who expound their constant certainty that God exists don't actually experience the Presence, but base their claim on only a conceptual belief.

“But I wonder ...Jean Piaget showed that in a child, object permanence is a stage of cognitive development. Before it's established, a child thinks that a ball hidden out of sight no longer exists. Once object permanence is achieved, the child knows the ball continues to exist, even if she doesn't actually see it

at the moment. Maybe this is so for spiritual development, too. Perhaps I'm just immature, and when I don't have a direct experience of Presence it no longer exists for me. Perhaps when I develop more, I'll have a sure sense that Spirit always exists, even if I don't sense it at the moment" [[RK_p331](#)].

Are we meant to know that Spirit always exists? Or are we just meant to know that there is Presence when we experience Presence? Are we just meant to know that if we develop our minds there can be an increase in Presence? Does it matter whether we know beyond concept that Spirit always exists? Does asking such questions simply disturb the mind unnecessarily?

In Buddhism this "what we are meant to know" is discussed as Buddha's unanswered questions and Buddha's Noble Silence. Patanjali wrote "How to know God", he did not write "How to know what God knows". In Buddhism we talk of [dhammajati](#):-

Is it sensible to ask why dhammajati is true?

- 1) Do we try to learn all of nature or learn of nature that humans can know?
- 2) Do we follow the laws of nature that do not apply to humans?
- 3) Is our duty to perform more than the laws of nature as applied to humans ?
- 4) Do we gain the fruits and benefits that arise from actions that are not our duty?

In a similar vein can we know the answer to this? "Pedagogy is displeasing me. Too black and white. Too Marxist dialectic. Freire also makes absolutist statements, comparing men to animals, and of course animals are just unconscious dumb brutes with automatic behavior. How can he know that with such certainty?" [[RK_p329](#)]. Later Bob wrote this on self "Is there a self or not? Tonight, it doesn't matter; presence or absence doesn't change the quality of the struggle to be free. And once I relax into the flow of Life, it also seems irrelevant, because the apparent self is at ease with all around it. The self may be illusory or not, but it's counterproductive to fret about it either way" [[RK_p350](#)], an unanswered question.

My quest for the unknown is limited to a quest for what humans can know.

Perhaps there is a further limitation – quest for the unknown that this human can know. But this limitation for me belongs to the unanswerable. I accept this limitation - I can try to know my kamma but I cannot know why kamma gave me this kamma. To know my kamma is to do the best to follow my path – authenticity. I can trust nature – not know nature, trust nature to know that if we all follow our paths then that is the best way. I trust that nature knows all kamma, but I cannot know all nature. I can know God but not what God knows. Faith in the Dhamma that has no beliefs. But then isn't this true:-

“trust nature to know that if we all follow our paths then that is the best way. I trust that nature knows all kamma, but I cannot know all nature.”

I have to correct myself – my faith is faith in the Dhamma with apparent minimal beliefs – faith with elements of doctrine. I do however have absolute faith in this trust of nature. But then I have faith in dhammajati, this faith still needs exploring - what is it that I have faith in? I do not have faith in all that varying Buddhists believe. Do I have faith in Buddhadasa's teachings? Usually but I investigate first (as he would encourage) – kalama sutta.

But on reflection there is something about these "apparent minimal beliefs", I know they are true. They are about nature, and I know they are true. There is absolute faith but also knowledge, faith and knowledge in the natural order of dhammajati. And this faith and knowledge are observably true. There is no leap of faith asked for in accepting Dhammajati - just clear observation, observation that is without conditioning. Examine the knowledge of dhammajati and compare it with beliefs in Buddhism and other religions, there is no leap of belief required. When I say "I know they are true", that is just an affirmation of the observed; faith without belief, faith without any requirement to believe in a doctrine.

The quest for the unknown is opening so many doors for understanding.

I am sure I have previously owned Paolo Friere's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" but it hasn't survived to the bookcase, nor have its contents registered significantly. But there is a new book Pedagogy of Hope that to me would be more interesting – after a lifetime of struggle. "Ideologically he's a

Marxist and asserts that dialogue with Elite Oppressors is impossible. He defines social reality as grounded in struggle rather than in mutual understanding. He points out the illusion of the myths Oppressors foist on the Oppressed — one being that Reality is given and unchanging — yet in defining social reality as a struggle between concrete classes, he does the same kind of mythologizing. I've never met anyone who is simply an oppressor or completely oppressed. We are all a complex mix of both.

“The oppressor/oppressed schema is sometimes applied to inner life, where the ego tries to oppress the whole human being. Perhaps dialogue with the ego is impossible and instead must be resisted or destroyed, but I tend to think this approach is mistaken. Rather than fighting the ego, my path lies toward balance and integration” [[RK_p341](#)].

This quote brings up much to discuss but I am trying not to cling to my personal history of which Freire could easily have been a part. Can there be dialogue with Elite Oppressors? For me such a dialogue to be meaningful the Oppressor would have to be willing to let go of power, historically has there

ever been an Oppressor willing to release power?

I am somewhat critical of Bob's use of the word myth. Is struggle between classes not a valid description of the world of conditioning? Is the world of conditioning not social reality for most? The world of conditioning could also be described as defiled world – defilements of greed, aversion and delusion; is defiled world the myth that Bob refers to? It doesn't feel so. Is the defilement of delusion “the illusions and myths that Oppressors foist”? Again I think not, as the oppressors are as much a part of the defiled world as the oppressed - it is just they have more power in this conditioned world. What is the sense or meaning of this power if they choose not to follow their paths? Isn't that power misplaced if they choose not to use it wisely?

Marx and most Marxist adherents do not accept the spiritual – these are not the only people who do not accept the spiritual including Elite oppressors. For change, isn't the spiritual dynamic, following the path to spirit, the narrative that needs to be addressed? Clinging to ditthis, world views or ideals such as Marxism, have been shown not to produce change. Will the

Elite Oppressors ever let go of their own clinging to power and wealth?

Are we oppressor/oppressed? Maybe so. Is this a useful frame of reference? Are we path/conditioned? For me this is a healthier frame of reference. The ego in its addiction does try to control and keep us in its world of conditioning, but when we are following the path we are beyond this control. But can we resist and destroy ego? I think not, both resistance and attempted destruction reinforce the ego. But through detailed inner inspection the ego loses its power to control, and by inspection we can let go of ego to obtain balance and integration. If we see the path/conditioned as a struggle in the vein of the class struggle of oppressor/oppressed, ego will remain. We struggle (determination) to follow the path, and not against the conditioning. Simply inspect the conditioning and let it go.

Liked this:- "I need to be careful not to natter about abstract notions, but to stick with my actual experience. Deep peace and harmony seem to arise when I surrender to the flow of the world, not when I'm analyzing it or staying busy to shut it out" [[RK p356](#)].

"In solitude, I see more clearly how we use social relationships as mirrors to maintain personal identity; through our interactions we hold each other's persona in place. I have an idea of who I am — a conceptual identity — and in subtle ways invite and manipulate others to treat me as this persona needs to be treated to survive. In solitude, without this constant mirroring, the persona can begin to unravel. Believing we actually are our persona, we may feel like we are literally going to physically die. Hence the terror. This has been my experience, and I believe the process is common to many" [[RK p368](#)].

My own experience is different from this and worth noting because of this difference. As a child I was so fragmented I had little identity; identity is one of the constructs of survival conditioning, discussed clearly in the first soliloquy half of [Eckhart's interview with Russell Brand](#) – to develop an ego/self that helps us survive growing up. At upheaval I hit bottom and [firstgrace](#) came. The identity I had was middle-class conformity, the education and middle-class job, but it was not of my choosing. Because of the

fragmentation there was so little of who I truly was invested in this identity, that when the identity started to break down there was very little consciousness trying to hold onto it. The conformed identity had nothing to do with me, and when drink and hitting bottom undermined what little of this conformity there was there was no resistance – none of the terror that Bob discusses.

On my return down to Chiswick when firstgrace came, my fragmented self became asserted, and there was so little identity self lost in hitting bottom there were no egoic desires for that identity to re-emerge. In fact now when I think of this identity prior to upheaval there is nothing I wish to reclaim, at best the identity was just passing time until the stronger fragmented self came to take over and there was also shame at some of the actions of that immature identity.

It took little for firstgrace to overcome my minimal identity – no real terror. But it does seem possible that pre-firstgrace identity and the path would be in conflict if that identity did try to re-emerge. If such an identity did try to come

back I would imagine that there could be “terror” as the path emerges in solitude and the ego had to release its grip.

Since upheaval I have never attempted to “create an identity”, in fact I am rarely concerned as to what people think of me. Following upheaval especially in the early years I considered my actions in terms of following the path only – how near or far I was from the path. Undoubtedly egos built up especially as I was a drunk for 10 years or so, but there was no identity that made me ashamed of the drunkenness; for sure there was a “drunken” ego deluding me about my behaviour – drunken actions being acceptable. As I went through my second childhood learning about life I do not recall an identity or any issues concerning self-esteem, but I do remember very strongly that a motivation for early retirement was the increasing distance from my path that I noted on my return to work from holidays in solitude. When reflecting in retirement about my path I feel grateful for the high degree of childhood fragmentation that meant there was so little childhood identity, and even more gratitude to the way firstgrace enabled that fragmented self to follow the path. Whilst I have not used this luck to a great

extent except in my path and writing now, this fragmentation made my life easier.

Eckhart documented his firstgrace in the introduction to “Power of Now”. Prior to his epiphany he was in a state of depression – this could be an example of the terror Bob is discussing, after firstgrace Eckhart was so grateful to have ended that depression there was no desire to allow that identity to return. As such the path and identity would have minimal conflict and so no new terror would happen.

Bob talks of his firstgrace but has not discussed his state of mind prior to firstgrace. It is conceivable that after his firstgrace identity returned, and in solitude that identity feels under threat again – terror; if I am correct perhaps that identity might feel stronger because ego has been subject to firstgrace. This is pure speculation and is only for Bob to judge, but the different experiences are worth discussing to help us understand. What is so important is for more people to follow their path. Experiences such as terror, depression, hitting bottom, firstgrace, bells and banjos are not validated in our

society as part of the path – often they are mocked, yet following the path is a much better way to live if we can manage it. Not only that but the path gives us the tools and motivation for coping with these "terrors". The phala (fruits) of [dhammajati](#) are no small thing, if we can experience them by following the path then please do.

Is terror what is called “dark night of the soul”?


In support of Bob's view of terror I want to reflect on pre-upheaval times. I was unconsciously a loner, walking around the suburb was never a conscious decision - I just did it. I describe the peers in my life as NPC but to each other that will not be their perception; that is partly the delusion we all have during conditioning but also because they were (probably) less fragmented and as such able to make more meaningful contact. At uni I made a conscious effort to know all the "names on campus" but never had anyone close - so much so I did not have a roommate, a great benefit although I didn't know it - felt rejected. But the hall of residence was designed for NPC as was uni as a whole. At the end of my time there I had to escape the unreality of cloisters,

was content to hide in the career conformity and go to where it happened; but I was afraid of being alone - frightened of the loneliness in London. I keep thinking the word "petrified", maybe I was petrified of being lonely or maybe I am just trying to fit in with Bob and his use of the word "terror"; in truth I am not aware enough of how I felt at that time.

I also question whether I was afraid or even petrified during abeyance - the time between my sacking and the return to London, Chiswick. I recall nothing of that month in the Manchester suburb, maybe that feeling of nothing (definitely not emptiness) was the nothing of equal meeting opposite. The path was driving me to the Chiswick loft and firstgrace, yet at the same time my conditioned ego was still holding onto the past as ego does. Maybe my path, with these opposing forces, negated the equivalent of Bob's terror. The ego is always afraid of its own dissolving and creates resistance, maybe in abeyance the path was being resisted and I just felt absolutely nothing. At that time I would have been unable to process any of this so nothing was a good state to be in until I decided to go back down to London. For me then London was doing something, Manchester suburb for my life then meant

doing nothing - abeyance.

Maybe life before upheaval was just ego in a state of subdued terror running from NPC to NPC trying to avoid firstgrace whilst the path inevitably went there?

"I see three possible responses to this unravelling ( the terror just discussed): embrace it, avoid it, or go mad. If we have some understanding of what is happening and the desire to seek a deeper center of ourselves than the shifting sand of our persona, we might make the effort to stay with the terror, loneliness, doubt, and despair until our ego-self dissolves into Something Greater. Then there can be self-acceptance and peace. It is as if a carpet is being pulled from beneath our feet and we feel we are falling into the void. If we remain quiet and alert, we discover there is a solid floor (or rather, the living Earth) beneath the carpet. Even though there is no static solidity, doubt and insecurity disappear and we feel cradled and cared for. But this is possible only once we surrender the idea of who we think we are. Individuals on a spiritual quest may go into solitude exactly because it is an intense

catalyst for such transformation” [RK_p369].

This is very powerful and clear, but I have to question this "our ego-self dissolves into Something Greater". Our ego-self arises out of conditioning, and is reinforced because we continually give it consciousness (attaching vinnana). If we look at the details of ego-self then we see there is nothing there, the ego-self dissolves and the consciousness remains. In a sense this vinnana as consciousness does belong to "Something Greater" but it is no different to the consciousness that we use with ayatana – when we use our senses. There is nothing great about the construction of our ego-self, it is just survival conditioning and then clinging to what nature asks us to let go. "Our ego-self dissolves" is enough - "into Something Greater" is not required.

Some of this quote rings true of my upheaval. During my upheaval there was no conscious sense of seeking or desire to go deeper. But there was undoubtedly a carpet being pulled from beneath my feet and a sense of void. Between the time of my sacking and the Chiswick loft there was no memory – no sanna-consciousness. I ran home because there was no floor, there was

just this abeyance – waiting for first grace? Maybe during this abeyance unconscious healing took place – perhaps there was some kind of centring that would enable me to embrace the ensuing fruits (phala of dhammajati) of the Chiswick loft. Although unaware of the phala I was conscious that a plan for surviving life was needed – a recognition that I needed work-discipline to get money to live; I never had that prior to the sack but on return to London that was foremost in my mind. That disciplined daily life structure was the minimal platform that gave the base for the Chiswick phala. As far as I recall there were no other agreements with the middle-class conformity of my upbringing – definitely no career even though I stayed in computing; in fact I remember the agency forcing me into cobol computing – computing (rejected with the sacking) had not been part of my minimal plan and cobol was “below the consultancies I had failed at”. I returned to London with bare minimal agreements with conformity, I was unconsciously void – ready for jhanas and phala.

Throughout the Viveka-Zandtao so far, solitude and quest, I have examined spiritual solitude but in a sense not delineated it - not definitively separated

the spiritual solitude from other forms of solitude. In <[\[RK this interlude \(pp357-\)\]](#)>, Bob talks of different solitudes – from the spiritual to the challenge of man against nature to the obstinacy of those who filled the contents of their minds to avoid facing aloneness. But I am taking control of the word Viveka to mean only spiritual whereas Buddhadasa (in [Happiness and Hunger](#) p30) describes 3 types of viveka (kaya citta and upadhi) - I am using Viveka as upadhi-viveka. The ego fears being faced. It has resistance to being faced and examined, it creates resistance to this examination because once there is examination in detail we can see there is nothing there. Think of egotists especially powerful ones. What makes them powerful is the abdicating of power by others, when the details of their lives are examined there is simply an addiction to the egos of wealth creation and desire for power. When we see the details there is nothing there to be admired.

In truth solitude is a “route one” way of facing ego but even in solitude facing ego can be avoided by the egotistical. Solitude is not a path panacea because in solitude the egotistically-determined can avoid facing ego. But when you are alone and admit to the path, admit to wanting to live in Viveka, admit to a

spiritual quest, solitude obviously can help.

Solitude + Quest = Viveka

But living alone does not mean that the ego gives up on its own survival, and even in solitude ego can create avoidance mechanisms of resistance. Is accepting Viveka and starting your own quest a path panacea? That is a worthwhile question as the word equation makes that assumption. In this book of [Viveka-Zandtao](#) there is perhaps questioning that is not directly focussed on spiritual solitude, but if the word equation is true that discerns the wood from the trees.

"I suspect the underlying dynamic for narcissism, perfectionism, and low self-esteem is the same. Different concepts to describe self-focus, isolation, and judgment. My intention with all this self-examination is to escape the narcissistic cycle and experience the world as vibrant and immediate. Jeez, what a twisted circular trap: focus on self because my experience is so self-

focused. But in Care of the Soul, Moore claims I can love myself as a simple manifestation of the universe without being narcissistic. Such self-acceptance brings me back into direct contact with the universe as it manifests itself in me” [\[RK_p389\]](#).

There have been a couple of things I have liked in his recent pages without comment such as his revelation "Last night I drifted into a sense of deep belonging and the awareness that I am the World. It's so easy to get lost in thinking about the experience, but when there is a moment of identity there's no mistaking it. More and more, I doubt whether there is any way to make such experience easily available to others. It just seems like a long, long journey, without set rules or regulations, into an unknown land” [\[RK_p387\]](#). I look at his enquiry into narcissism, and feel that is for him. What does it mean for this Viveka and quest? His ego, his revelation, his journey. That is the way the path is.

So what are of his journey that can raise issues for all? He is examining his clinging – upadana (to the four – kama, ditthi, silabatta and attavada). How

does he/we cling? There must be clinging, without it there is Unity all the time – conscious I am the World all the time. If there isn't that feeling then there is clinging. Thinking of the abeyance before upheaval, there was no feeling; maybe now there is clinging and I don't feel it. Maybe the upadana that I accept – warts&all – is upadana I should not accept. My lament – why aren't I concerned more about my upadana? How much of that would then be bashing – BillZ-bashing?

And Bob has quest "long, long journey, without set rules or regulations, into an unknown land" – he calls this a pathless way ("I can't imagine many people would want to follow such a pathless way" [[RK p387](#)]). Isn't that just path? Does calling it path - a quest in solitude after removing upadana - any more useful than pathless way? In the end he has to dig into himself in his way, I have to dig into myself my way. The path means people have to dig into themselves their way to "experience the world as vibrant and immediate". Of course we can see in this [defiled world](#) that this is not happening. Doesn't sound fun, does it? Especially if we have experienced the bells and banjoes of [firstgrace](#), how can we then want the discipline of

digging deep? Quest in solitude after removing upadana, dig into yourself in your way. No fun. Yet it is because there are phala, the fruits of dhammajati, phala – the most meaningful fun; just not firstgrace.

Digging into myself – not feeling the clinging now as I didn't in abeyance. Do I need to create discontent the way Bob does? Yet the Dhamma is the solution, Dhamma brings peace. There is something I am missing – like clinging to the socialism of compassionate socialism when socialism is ditthi and compassion was the answer. And this clinging forced me into a socialist corner, and I was content with that - warts&all. Where is the spade? I do need to dig for upadana without creating false discontent - dukkha, ego has some sort of grip because there is an accepted level of upadana and there is a resistance to ending that clinging - that warts&all.

"I'm frightened of the powerful mysterious Presence I sense, even though I believe it's loving. The fear comes not from it, but from my ego freaking out over loss of control. Once the shift happens and I experience myself as part of something greater, there is wonder and peace, but beforehand it feels like

impending death.

"I complain about fear, but if it's true that we fear the unknown as a generic condition, then the path out of small self and into Life/Spirit must lead through fear. My feelings of anxiety seem to depend on how rigidly I build protective walls: the more open I am, the less threatening the Other seems.

"I talk about the need to surrender, but the experience of feeling weak, vulnerable, and dependent brings up feelings of shame. The shame comes partly from our strong cultural ideal of autonomy and self-reliance, and partly from my own deep rebellion and pride. I don't want to be naked and ask for acceptance just as I am. Ah, but it's cold and lonely inside these walls" [[RK p392](#)].

I am again trying to ask the same questions of myself that Bob raises of himself, but I don't feel them – fear and surrender. And the best answer I come up with are “paths are different”. Do I feel fear of the mysterious Presence? No. SHOULD I feel that fear? Perhaps so if that was my path. Am

I avoiding? Not intentionally.


SHOULD I surrender? If I am following the path, no. If I am clinging to ego, yes. Is my path telling me to surrender? No. Am I avoiding a need to surrender? Not intentionally.

SHOULD is an intellectual word, it comes from the intellect telling you what to do, or perhaps from reading the dogma that tells you what you should do – either way a mental construct; the path just does. How Bob follows his path is his business – path. Because he is being open and honest his path gives me questions to answer - gives us all questions to answer. But it does not mean that how Bob questions himself is how I question myself, how you question yourself. There needs to be a response to the questions Bob raises but it is legitimate for those answers to be “not my path at the moment”. Of course there is a legitimate counter of avoidance, one of the defilements the ego embraces, so when Bob raises legitimate spiritual questions such as egoic fear of Presence and surrender to Presence we need to be spiritually strong enough to know whether we are avoiding. Paths are different, nothing is permanent,

and maybe next time I read this it becomes my path. That's OK.

Here is a possible answer to SHOULD in the context of Bob's life – "the more I try the less it is likely to happen". "This transformation has been my deepest goal for the past twenty-five years — since my first wilderness retreat, or even since I stopped doing LSD when I was twenty. I've given up so much for it: security, career, family. It's painful to feel that in some sense I've wasted my life. Of course, from another perspective, I've lived as I have because I've wanted adventure and not responsibility.

"What makes it so hard is that after all these years and all this experience I still don't know how to break free of this small tight mind. It's ironic. The more I try, the less likely it is to happen — because it's the I/ego that's trying to break free, and that very trying actually reinforces the tightness. Yet the pain of being caught in the small I is what drives the urge to freedom. Once I slip out of the closed loop, I no longer feel the shame of failure; I'm content to just be. Of course from that open space, I haven't failed and I do have something to share.

"At the point today, almost unnoticed, I drifted free. The same thing often seems to happen: I become exhausted, give up struggling, and relax. There must be an easier more sensible way to shift into that open space without so much trauma" [[RK p395](#)]. A small smile. The conflict between path and ego means there is nothing straightforward. We have to try and not try!! . And there are always phala ([dhammajati](#)) like the open space.

Path is fascinating and reading or listening to people on the path such as [Batgap](#) adds to that fascination. "In terms of a method for bringing about this transformation, I'm as bewildered as I was twenty-five years ago. I read Ken Wilber and he makes the process of spiritual development seem straightforward. But in my journey, it seems like there are no clear signposts or procedures to move me in the direction I want to go. Everything I try keeps me stuck, and release comes only when I finally give it up. But when I try to consciously yield, that doesn't seem to work either, because there's always a small flicker of "looking over my own shoulder" to see if the capitulation is working. There's a sense of "doing it so that . . ." that is not true surrender,

but negotiation” [RK_p396]. When you read teachers such as Buddhadasa, there is an explained easiness about the path but the reality is that there is nothing easy – especially if it is forced. It is also fascinating to read of ego-tricks such as Bob’s recognising a negotiation instead of surrender.

Then we can get to his wisdom “When I’m more open, I realize that the success/failure dichotomy is a confusion of small mind. There is no absolute success or failure, just process and journeying. I won’t leave here with any definite answers, but I will have something to share with others — even if only a warning against any set procedure that promises success!” [RK_p396]. Following the path with MwB meditation brings success is true, blase and easy to say, but doing it – not so easy. But do we look for “success”? Or just simply enjoy the process with dhammajati’s phala.

"For a while, as dark set in and the moon lit sea and mountains, it all opened out into nameless color, shape, and movement. Softly, everything came alive. Yes, this is it. All of Existence together is alive. Experientially, a tree, a rock, a bird, is not alive because those things are conceptually created fragments,

and concepts are not alive. The process of creating concepts is a living process, but the concepts themselves are neither alive nor dead. Only the whole pulsating cosmos is alive” [RK p419]. Nothing to be said, how will he use this and other experiences?

In [RK the interlude pp 420-444], Bob explicitly confirmed that he was doing a PhD, and this took me back to my interaction with academia. I have had a number of battles that can be summarily pigeon-holed into the framework of insight vs intellect, and I have concluded very firmly that the more we can minimise the intellectual ego the greater chance we have for spiritual development. Therefore when Bob concludes this interlude with “Learning to integrate my personal spiritual search into the academic community and learning to use intellectual study as one modality of spiritual practice has provided an appreciated opportunity for development. From an intellectual perspective, my mind has sharpened and broadened, and from a spiritual perspective, it’s all grist for the mill” [RK p443], all I see is a barrier to insight. I will always remember the conclusion of one battle in which I described my blogs as developing insight and the blog was described as

intellectual. Initially I was angry until it taught me that insight was a process, insights once in language are simply ideas or thoughts - the realm of the intellect. Insight matters - Dhamma, the realm of intellect is an arena of ideas - sankhara. Buddhadasa talks of the proliferations of sankhara – the khandha of mental process, and sees atammayata as the ending of this proliferation.

Mid-life I did an M Ed. I was in Botswana having a resurgence of enjoying teaching after being ground down in the UK. But putting the natural beauty that I loved aside there was nothing to do. Colleagues got drunk and chased women, and whilst the women were a part of my life then they were diversions and not purpose. I loved Africa, these women in general, but mentally I was getting bored. I derided a friend who was doing an M Ed and soon after started one.

What grabbed me about this M Ed was that it was based on teaching experience. It was directed to the “mature” who were then expected to academicise their experience ie read books about the experience and draw conclusions based on contemporary educational theory.

Experience + Study = M Ed

Once I got into it, my tutor kept saying “too many words”, and we spent time trying to find a way of limiting what I wrote to the required numbers - usually by calling what I wrote appendices. I enjoyed the process so much I kept pushing for a Ph D, and the tutor thinking he was fobbing me off told me after the M Ed to come up to the university. I was angered as his face dropped when I turned up. I was told to write a Ph D proposal, and out of guilt, I suspect, was introduced to a gatekeeper. I remember nothing of this gatekeeper except that he was American and his sole purpose seemed to be to protect those who had Ph Ds as elite. I had perceived an M Ed as entering academia but in reality they could give away M Eds but Ph Ds were elite and exclusive.

Prior to meeting the gatekeeper there was this proposal (I don't have it any more); my vague recollection was that it was about consensus of what was mind across all religions and academia. As with the M Ed, for me

understanding mind was starting with experience; through my spiritual path I already had some personal knowledge of mind. Whilst that experience and knowledge was minimal, I knew there was much of the academic theories of mind that were academic constructs. The negative in me associated those constructs with academic job-creation schemes:- one unique consistent theory = 1 unique chair = 1 reputation for the particular academic church. When I was being asked by the gatekeeper to study philosophy undergraduate year 1, I knew that I was being required to study and understand all theories so that I could then reject most as mental constructs - what I now understand as proliferations of sankhara. In one sense the gatekeeper was right, how was I going to know which theoretical constructs of mind were relevant to the consensus of mind I was looking for? But I knew most of it was proliferation and I knew the gatekeeper was just trying to put me off. They considered they were being dutiful and tolerant by giving me a tutor; what they did was token, they did all but tell me to go fly a kite. But to be fair to them they did not misuse me by taking money for Ph D fees - I presume I paid something but it was more than fair as I was not rich and I don't recall being hurt.

With the elitist gatekeeping of the Ph D my experience was thrown out of the window. By this time I had left Africa, and my job was more time-consuming. I read some of the various mental constructs of mind, and produced something that the tutor described as Hindu-Buddhist inclusivism in a dismissive way. It was this requirement to study mental constructs that makes me so grateful that I cut and run once I had been given this pejorative "Hindu-Buddhist inclusivism"; I am sure the tutor of *Hindu-Buddhist inclusivism* was happy with my decision. Now, after my study in retirement, I consider that within Hinduism and Buddhism themselves, let alone other religions - even worse academia, there is far too much proliferation that wears me down. I baulk at imagining the torture of trying to embrace all the mental constructs of mind in the home of proliferation - academia. I still laugh at an irony when considering academia; academia is the place for the mind yet does not agree to what mind is - or rather the people who do know what mind is are not necessarily given greater credence than a writer of a book of logical-consistent mental absurdist construct. If it's new give them a chair, if it's old and true there is no acceptance because of the lack of invention - especially if the description of mind is based on insight or revelation; albeit


that insight and revelation is essentially the same as every insight or revelation - isn't that empirical proof??

Soon after the self-dismissal I went to Thailand on holiday and became a Buddhist. I refuse to write academically now, any references I give are to prove I am not lying or taking out of context, an attempt to maintain faith with the writer. I write and accept spiritual experience as fundamental requiring no justification other than a commitment of the writer to spirit. By the time spiritual experience has been intellectualised it has usually lost its truth. Although I am being simplistic academia, the place for mind to express itself, has no clear understanding of mind. It wants no such clear understanding, it desires no such truth. If a meditator were to say it was fallacious, the meditator would be dismissed; if that meditator were the Buddha it would make no difference.

Within academia there are great people with powerful minds. Those minds are not however directed to the greatest understanding – spiritual understanding, although I do understand some spiritual people have found

niches as they have found elsewhere – needing money to survive and some form of purpose in conditioned world. As for myself I am more than glad that they closed off the Ph D for me. Could I have got one? Doubtful but it sends a shiver to think I could have spent all that time reading books just to go down their rabbit-hole. The M Ed was enough, it opened up learning for me; I took that opening and turned back towards spirit.

Academia is not a place of spirit but a place of intellect. Academia builds up the intellect, fills the mind with content as do all education establishments, and a full mind has difficulty accessing spirit. Eckhart describes mind as having a density filled with these contents, and [firstgrace](#) has to provide a crack in this density – discussed [here](#). I perceive excess of intellect creating an almost impenetrable swirling vortex-sphere of ideas and intellectual constructs that try to prevent the path from accessing the path's intended centre, the more ideas that are spawned the stronger the vortex. If Bob is making his journey into solitude whilst at the same time trying to PhD, for me he is living with the contradiction of insight and intellect. I hope it works for him, it is not something I will try. Academia needs to learn to accept the

higher wisdom of spirit, and not try to drag spirit down into the chaos of intellectual egos. Reviewing this I laughed with a sense of acceptance of this not happening. 

"There's been a shift in consciousness these past few days. An opening into spacious stillness and peace. I'm not always there, but when I notice I'm not and pause to relax, it flows back effortlessly" [[RK_p447](#)]. What a great state to be. End of book? Why isn't it?


"Twenty-five years ago, during my first long wilderness retreat, I decided that the only thing worth dying for is living fully. In a sense I've remained committed to that, even in the face of disapproval from others for being selfish and irresponsible. I need to remember that if I'm true to my own nature, I'll be making the contribution I'm meant to make, even if everyone else disapproves. Over and over I see that my fundamental task here is to live this experience to the fullest.

"I finished Storr's Solitude, and it reminded me of Jung's belief that all

psychological growth is essentially religious. I must trust my own natural process of growth. It's not particularly relevant which level of spiritual development I'm on. Orientation is much more pragmatically important. If I hold onto my self as the center, I stagnate and suffer. If I'm open to change and being part of something greater, I experience joy and peace" [[RK_p467](#)]. Excellent. Follow your path and trust in nature.

What does Jung mean "all psychological growth is essentially religious"? "Jung established a school of psychology which emphasizes the human quest for wholeness (which he defined as the integration of conscious and unconscious components of the psyche) through a process called individuation" [wiki](#). Trying to get into Jung could be deadly academia, lots of reading to circumnavigate the truth. Quest for wholeness leading to individuation is fine for me if that individuation accepts unity – and Dhamma/Nature; academia can't accept those. Inasmuch as psychological growth is concerned with life's journey then it is religious in the broad sense, broad sense meaning life's journey and religion are the same; however both religion and psychology are diverted away from life's journey by

conditioning and its defilements. Essentially I can accept all psychological growth is religious, but beyond acceptance I have no wish to offer any proof – aaaaggghhhh, the thought of trying to convince intellectual egos of this! Maybe a PhD if I were to start life again?

"Care of the Soul ( - a book by Thomas Moore) argues that soul work is right where things are hardest and where we don't want to be. That's where the ego wall is weakest and where we can most easily open up and let something from beyond come in. Does this mean I should celebrate my flaws? That's then certainly where I'm apt to be more humble about my life. The trick is not to try to fix the weak spots, but to acknowledge them and be with myself as I am" [[RK p468](#)]. Don't accept this because in the acknowledgement as described there is no progress. Warts&all contain upadana, and if there is upadana then part of the quest is to remove it. The problem is forced removal. If I get all renunciate and say no TV, that will last for a while; I will improve during the renunciation period before ego comes back and I will binge TV. There needs to be balanced removal. Somehow there needs to be an acceptance of lessening the warts&all, not a hammer

crushing the warts but a gradual acceptance that will let it go. In Bob's terms, acknowledge the weak spots, recognise they are upadana and be with them as they are, but once we have been with them, take this acceptance and gradually let them go. We are not our egos - upadana, we are not the attachment to weak spots, we are authentic - follow our paths.

Paticcasamuppada (Buddhadasa's interpretation) describes how ego is created, and can help us not to produce attachments and egos. After the arising of the 6 sense bases we can intervene at the point of contact so that the ayatana do not give rise to ego. Through sati – mindfulness, we intervene at the point of contact, and let go breaking the causal chain. Within me forcing this intervention causes an opposite reaction leading to an indulgence of warts&all. No balance. Overall through developing Dhamma by MwB or otherwise there is progress, but if there is force there is resistance and imbalance. Work needs doing but no force. I sort of accept this weakness because balance is important, imbalance is a stressed life without joy - dukkha. But in the long term that is an acceptance of ego. Overall there is progress, path/meditation guides me in this through developing Dhamma, but

there needs to be change, an end to warts&all upadana; however force is not the answer for me. I am not comfortable with this as it sounds so complacent, but I trust the path and life with Dhamma is not meant to be stress. In meditation I came up with “would the inner guide accept this?”, and if the upadana gets past my inner guide “would Buddhadasa accept this?” I don’t know whether these strategies will work, or whether that is also too much force.

The better answer for me is more meditation and the development of the Dhamma comrades. Through [dhammajati](#) the Dhamma fixes weakspots whilst I acknowledge who I am – warts&all – gradually warts&all reducing. There is a balance between developing Dhamma comrades and digging into the upadana – a balance without stress. In quest we learn about ourselves and our balance - as we do in solitude.

This meticulous approach of digging into upadana during meditation sounds like micro-management and to use a bad word “anal-retentive”. But it isn’t. In daily life we cannot maintain this attention to personal detail because the

conditions of daily life pull us from one situation to another. Under this pressure how can we control our response? Meditation into micro-management shows us how to respond particularly the next time, developing the Dhamma ensures that we are following the path and helps us ensure that our responses reflect who we truly are. If we have the equivalent of this meditation and micro-management, then we can have the confidence that we will follow the path even if we are under pressure from daily life; we can then avoid reactions that come from conditioning. Occasional solitudes (or refuges) will also be required for centring.

In teaching I studied beyond the knowledge I required so that I had confidence in the knowledge I taught; I know this is true from the rare occasions where money and time pushed me to take on too much. In this attention to upadana during meditation, we go beyond the detailed requirements of daily life so that we have the confidence that we can cope with what life throws at us. Through developing Dhamma we have the path as well, it's nailed mostly.

"In the last section of the book, Moore talks about reanimating the world. There is a collective world soul that every being and object is part of. It's rare to read about this feeling of existing in a living world. I paused and it washed softly over me. The cabin and everything else came alive. Such tenderness and love. Tears blurred my eyes. This is what I've been seeking for so long, and as usual I've had it backward. I've been focused on my experience of sensing the world as alive rather than focusing on the world itself" [[RK p469](#)]. Excellent – endofquest again!

But then he writes this:- "I awoke with that old feeling of not getting anywhere. I hear about people making progress in therapy and spiritual practice, but I've been at this shit for thirty-five years with little to show for it. I feel like Sisyphus, and question why I've wasted my life doing this when it's clearly not going anywhere" [[RK p518](#)]. Considering his [firstgrace](#), 447 and 469 above, what expectations are there? I have to leave that question open. Aren't moments of surrender more than enough? What more is there? What is asking for more? Keep going, *doing the best I can* - [4 Agreements](#).

"Perhaps the darkness I fear so much is not evil, but loss of control. Ego hanging on for dear life, even though its need for control is killing me. Moments of surrender come and go, and perhaps one of the lessons I'm learning is that I can't depend on peak experiences to change my way of being. It's a long process, a lot of work, and it may come to naught" [[RK p505](#)]. I feel happy reading this. Is Mara, Buddhist evil, not a personal demon ie ego? Moments of surrender presence happen. They are not caused by peak experiences, as with peak experience presence happens because of the state of mind - atammayata. The **long process** is creating the state of mind by releasing the attachments that cause ego, ending upadana. We can only do the best we can to end upadana.

Just finished a breakthrough on upadana. I had been focusing on the 4 types of upadana – kama, ditthi, silabatta and attavada. But I began focussing on upadana itself independent of its objects (types). Upadana is clinging, a mental process – sankhara, and I have felt this mental process before at Nyanga when I cleared the internalising of the pain associated with Peyton Place (discussed in [Pathivist Trilogy](#)). Where that pain had been clinging had

been replaced by clinging in general – addiction, I was giving consciousness to the clinging giving it attachment/life where the internalising had previously occurred. I let go of the consciousness that was substantiating the clinging egos of upadana, this hopefully ending the upadana. It was not as powerful as Nyanga but there is an emptiness in the stomach area where the upadana had been clinging. I know now not to give consciousness to the mental process of clinging. Question – not for now as I am a bit drained, what is the positive of which upadana is egoic clinging?

Two days later, I consolidated and it was hard to get up; I was connected to Dhamma and I got up and ego made it hard. There is path or ego, Dhamma or upadana, I have said that but it hadn't sunk in with implications. There is only Dhamma or not. It is a choice, a decision. Dhamma needs to be 24/7, when it is not it is upadana. Warts&all is upadana, it is not complacency but it is upadana. Forcing it just adds to the upadana, 24/7 Dhamma needs to be choice not force. But here is the only allowable (non-egoic) comparison, being Dhamma is better than having egos, than being in upadana. In solitude this choice is much clearer - path or ego, Dhamma or upadana, but out there

in daily life is where this matters. In solitude we learn, out there we do.

"This afternoon I was washed with a wave of grief for Mom. I cried as I acknowledged to myself how much I caused her to suffer by my inability to open up and be soft with her these past years. I tried so hard, but each time I went to visit I'd feel threatened, guard myself, and hold her away. Where did such hurt and rage come from? I have a dozen narratives to explain the family dynamic, but so what?

"In my grief today, I also discovered shame. I've never really acknowledged how deeply ashamed of myself I am. Shame for who I am and who I am not. Especially my fear, weakness, and self-centeredness. I also must admit that I was ashamed of Mom, and I'm ashamed of myself for this, too. Feeling ashamed of someone who loves you must be one of the most hideous and damaging things you can do. I've done this to all the women who have loved me. Perhaps when I can't face my own shame, I dump it on others" [[RK p519](#)]. When this quote is considered with presence, moments of surrender, expectations and other, I must ask if there is an issue of integration or as Teal

would describe completion.

With regards to Bob I make no comment but would like to discuss the issue of integration, an issue I know he has mentioned. This is the essence of the Buddha's teachings on the 4 foundations of mindfulness, resulting in the meditation technique taught by Buddhadasa – Mindfulness with Breathing MwB. The 4 tetrads look at body - kaya, emotions – vedana, mind – citta, and integrating in Dhamma. One characteristic of ego is that it is “all over the place”. The 4 Dhamma comrades, samadhi, gives focus, and together with ending upadana this focus brings integration and calm – ending the jumping all over the place. In completion Teal sees this as the practice of putting yourself back together again. If there is a lack of focus, if ego takes you “all over the place” look at integration – MwB?

"According to Wilber, we're evolving on all levels: physical, cultural, and cognitive. Humans haven't left behind some ideal state of being and run off the rails by developing a strong differentiated ego. The emergence of the ego is a vital stage of development, but not the end of the process. The individual

still needs to integrate the ego into the soul and into the embracing swirl of the universe. We haven't gone astray, but neither have we arrived to where we're going" [RK p529]. I have never got into Wilber finding him too intellectual ie having an intellectual ego. Much of this contains speculation about what we can't have knowledge of – kamma's purpose. Are we evolving? It makes sense to think so. How can we know of an ideal state prior to ego? The emergence of ego seems to be placed in an evolutionary context, I don't know about that either but in each individual the emergence of ego is as a result of conditioning – the instinctive need to survive to adulthood. It is then hoped that as adults we mature and let the ego drop away. The ego is not integrated into the soul, the ego prevents the soul from integrating mind, emotion and body. If the soul, not a word Buddhists use, has been integrated then that process of integration includes integration with Dhamma – presumably what Wilber means as universe. We haven't gone astray because the creation of ego is simply survival until as adults we mature and integrate with the Dhamma – universe. The purpose of ego is solely to survive into adulthood - until we can follow our paths authentically; how can we be authentic as children when we cannot know ourselves?

Why does ego go on beyond its natural purpose - why doesn't it just drop away as adults? As a species we have not recognised our purpose – to follow our paths; as such we mostly have not learned to let go of ego. Instead of letting go we become attached and create a defiled world full of greed, aversion and delusion. In this defiled world we encourage the continuation of ego, encouraging greed, instead of going beyond conditioning. Because more of us cling to ego the defiled world gets more defiled, and humanity's place within that world is under existential threat because of the greed. Seeing ego as human development is an aspect of delusion; in terms of evolution it might well be human development (that is for Kamma to know), but in terms of individual growth and development beyond adulthood it is defilement. The path and the Dhamma don't need ego of any form as a means of surviving in adulthood. I hope Wilber does not have an intellectual ego that says what is in this quote.

In this world our *enemy* is conditioning, and conditioning effectively has two types of conditionings, natural and societal – although societal intentionally

derives from the natural.

Let us first consider natural conditioning. It begins from birth where nature gives us instincts to survive. Through these instincts and love upbringing gives us an identity that helps us survive, but once we reach adulthood that conditioning with its identity and basis in instinct would naturally fall away as we follow the path. This is where societal conditioning steps in as social forces have found it beneficial to continue the natural conditioning long into adulthood - rather than let it fall away so that we can follow the path.

Let us examine how conditioning affects us, and this comes from the natural law of paticcasamuppada:-

- (1). With ignorance as a condition, mental concocting arises;
- (2). With mental concocting as a condition, consciousness arises;
- (3). With consciousness as a condition, mentality/materiality arises;
- (4). With mentality/materiality as a condition, the six sense bases arise;
- (5). With the six sense bases as a condition, contact arises;
- (6). With contact as a condition, feeling arises;
- (7). With feeling as a condition, craving arises;
- (8). With craving as a condition, attachment arises;
- (9). With attachment as a condition, becoming arises;
- (10). With becoming as a condition, birth arises;
- (11). With birth as a condition, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and tribulation arise. Thus the mass of suffering arises.

Upadana comes in at stage 7 from the feelings of vedana then creating attachments which give rise to the birth of egos that can bring the suffering in stage 11. From the birth of egos comes defilement, and from defilement can come the harm that causes suffering. In daily life sila prevents that harm from hurting others, but in solitude we only harm ourselves. In daily life we compromise with the 1%-satrapy so that we can earn our money whilst minimising harm – right livelihood. But it is a compromise; the 1%-satrapy does not allow livelihoods not to cause harm, even nurses can only do the best they can because society limits funds. Societal conditioning makes defilement part of our way of life - it makes harm part of the same way, in order that money can be made. This societal conditioning is systemic, it is part of the 1%-satrapy but differentiating the source of societal conditioning from the conditioning itself is not possible; the system and societal conditioning are indistinguishable.

Basically societal conditioning follows on from natural conditioning reinforcing the instinct and identity of our upbringings. Into adulthood nature

gives us the authenticity to follow the path through firstgrace and other insights to enable the release of conditioning, but instead of that happening societal conditioning often kicks in reinforcing the egos that prevent us from following the path. We can only do the best we can to avoid this conditioning – compromise. Our enemy is this conditioning which we are forced to compromise with. We do the best we can to avoid harm whilst making the money we need to survive – trying to make money without defilement of greed, aversion and delusion.

In solitude if we have the finance the only harm we can cause is to ourselves. In my personal case the finance I have is from pensions. With pensions I am forced to compromise again – I would prefer my pension to arise from ethical investment, but the 1%-satrapy takes that decision away from me. In solitude the consequences of upadana are immediately visible. Who creates the upadana that leads to the egos that cause suffering? We do, but it would be naive to suggest that it is possible for all to end upadana. We do the best we can – compromise.

But in this compromise we do cause self-harm, and it is therefore best to be conscious of the harm we do. In our compromise with the 1%-satrapy we avoided (minimised) harm through our compromised choice of livelihood. In our solitary compromise we avoid harm through awareness of upadana. If we know the upadana we compromise with we can limit the harm and suffering it causes – be aware of warts&all and then limit suffering. Hopefully on our paths through increasing connection to Dhamma, we can continue to reduce upadana so that there will be less and less harm, but if we try to force this reduction ego will resist and perhaps cause worse harm.

What comes to mind is consideration of Bob Kull's terror. He has indicated this terror might come from ego and therefore come from upadana by [paticcasamuppada](#). Does he know his enemy? Is he conscious of the way ego uses his upadana? Shadow is a frightening aspect of upadana. As children we fragment our being in order to compromise with our conditioning – our upbringing. If as adults we have not reconciled the inner child - ([Thay's book](#)), then shadow is there. If we have shadow then unknown upadana is present, upadana that we are not conscious of – is this Bob's terror?

In solitude it is necessary to compromise with upadana before hopefully through Dhamma practice we can finally release all of it. It is essential that we are conscious of this upadana through examining the 4 upadanas of kama, ditthi, silabatta and attavada; but it is also essential that our consciousness is integrated - removing shadow so that we can be consciously aware of the impact of all our upadanas. To do this we have to have reconciled the inner child and later on integrated any fragments that conditioning may have forced on us in later life eg pain and suffering in relationship. In solitude we compromise with the upadana by becoming aware of how the ego expresses itself, until hopefully we can let all the ego go – ending upadana.

"Buddhism sometimes claims that all sense of separateness is an illusion. One reason for going into solitude is to explore the unity that lies beneath our apparent aloneness; beneath the need to connect through social engagement, mediated by language. For me, the only way to satisfactorily answer the question, “Are we truly alone, locked into separate minds and bodies?” is experientially through a transformation of consciousness.

“M. C. Escher’s drawing Bond of Union beautifully depicts our situation. Each of us has a distinct perception of the world, and we can never know the actual experience of another. We are profoundly alone. Yet we can intertwine and to some extent share our experiences. More, if we are willing to quiet our minds and peer beyond the allure of language, we might discover that we are fundamentally united. But the drawing is not inclusive enough, because I sometimes experience all people and all nonhuman organisms as manifestations of our common flowing Life. And finally, the planets among which we float are us. Our sense of separateness, while not exactly an illusion, is not the whole truth” [[RK p556](#)].

In [[RK interlude 540-570](#)] Bob begins a ramble about solitude pulling together different views of solitude, in truth I can’t see beyond the academia in this. Why is there a personal need to discuss solitude from all sides when he has experienced the Unity? Maybe it is this academic requirement?

Examining solitude in this Viveka-Zandtao has been quite a surprise making

me face solitude as the reality of my life now - and the significance of solitude before. What has become clear is that my life has been lived in solitude, a solitude that has existed behind the requirements of daily life. The inner me followed the path in internal solitude whilst the outer me battled the dilemmas caused by the compassion decision at firstgrace. Whilst the path and this outer compassion were close at firstgrace, by the time I retired early there was a great distance. At retirement I associated this with the lack of genuine education happening in the schools I worked in, but maybe it was a reflection of the distance that was always there – my path was never this compassion only. How much did I teach to avoid dedicating to the path? But then of course I couldn't be dedicated because I didn't have money – although people say money comes if you decide to be dedicated.

I barely kept hold of the path during the teaching. I have referred to this time as second childhood as there was a need to gain experience. But whilst that was true developing the path was mostly ignored, to such an extent that when I retired it took me a long while to fully recognise that only the path was what mattered. During teaching the path lay deeper and deeper within at a distance

from my daily life surfacing only at times of solitude away from the teaching life. But this was resuscitation of the path rather than development.

I am now alone because in my daily life and because of this distance from the path I never lived with path-seekers. Now that I am following the path solitude is a consequence, because path-communication won't happen. Instead conversation means being drawn into defending compassion as the MAWPs defend their version of defilement. Over the years there has been path-communication – glimpses – chance encounters on the road; maybe occasional glimpses would bring me occasionally out of solitude but most likely not even that.

I am now drawn to get deeper and deeper into the path requiring greater solitude. This was a path-decision not my decision, and became clear during Viveka-Zandtao. Maybe there will can be a limited outer component but I am not sure my body could take more than that now; not sure I would want more than that now. Go deep on my own and see what happens.

As my quest into the unknown goes further this knowledge becomes part of the gestalt. My [website](#) makes a token effort at community awareness, but in truth will it have any impact as the world is so full of information? And so few people taking deep inner journeys? Bob, beyond understanding my own experience of solitude I can draw no academic conclusions. The Thomas Merton in me would make “education for solitude” compulsory school curriculum – as would meditation be compulsory, and those with sufficient practical skills I would put on Thomas Merton wilderness island requiring a journal to get off. Or maybe driving across the Wahiba on their own after suitable 4by4 Bedouin training? Taking those Brixton kids to Yorkshire Dales for the weekend gave them something but long-term, given all that daily life will throw at them? And is it worth the risk now, if they got scratched the teacher would be locked up or fined? Long term did the Oman weekend give them anything? I don't know but in my own childhood walking science-teachers sparked my own love of Pennine walking prior to retirement. Is solitude for everyone? Yes because nature has given everyone a path, and solitude helps us follow that path. Would everyone experiencing solitude follow their path? Absolutely not. I always say if everyone was meditating

things would be better, if everyone spent time in solitude things would be better. I can only say that because the *if* won't happen in my lifetime - won't



In the interlude [[RKpp631-642](#)] Bob discusses technology and desire wrt how much technology he uses to survive his solitude. I have not questioned whether he needed all the gadgets, I assumed he did. In fact his ability to maintain some of the gadgets is part of my admiration.

It is not for me to question his technology but I do question mine. Although I describe myself in solitude the internet is central to my life. My writing is not accessed but my giving back is my [website](#), my html is limited but central to my path – at least it's self-taught. My ego is entertained by the internet enabling sports, movies, TV, shallow communication, occasionally more meaningful stuff, and access to great teachers such as Buddhadasa, Thay, Eckhart, K and many more. Access to journeys of the “ordinary spiritual” through [Batgap](#). In fact the information I don't access is far more than the library of books in the old studies that were never read.

I am completely dependent on the internet, my path would be completely changed if there were no internet but at this stage in my life 68 I have no idea how I would bring meaning to my journey without it. Maybe that is a question to answer, how would I "give back" without the internet?

Because I live rurally I cannot eat without a car, it is a fear for old age if I cannot drive. Will I be forced to move into town so I can walk to eat/buy food? Look at how distanced from nature that is, it is about money and access, and nothing to do with my personal relationship to nature and the growing of food. My survival is at the mercy of people I completely distrust, and I can do nothing about it. No-one knows how Covid will affect the economies. What I do know is that the 1%-satrapy will provide for itself first and then its puppets, an old man and his pensions are a long way down the priorities. This is noticeably different between UK and Thailand; in Thailand a military man has shown more compassion for the people than the leaders in the UK where people rely on the NHS, no money is being given to it, and Covid is delaying even more of its assets being sold off. I have to rely on

puppets to continue paying my pension, and given it is frozen I know their decisions concerning what is paid are arbitrary. Can I guarantee in my lifetime that the UK economy will be sufficiently strong that the 1% can take their money and the government pay my pension post-Covid? My teacher pension is more reliable because during Covid teachers have been paid, and I think the pension is connected with that. I could survive on a teacher's pension and reduced state pension – but with a car? A car would mean no medical savings but a car is required. I have to accept what happens to my pension, there is nothing I can do. I suppose I could teach again, what would that do to my body if I had to work again?

So my dependence on internet and UK government are no different to any other citizen, my solitude is not concerned with any survival skills and surviving in solitude is beyond my control. If I was younger I could regain that control by learning skills to survive with a trade (as well as teaching) or learn skills to survive like Fogle's people, but my body doesn't want to make such a change; is it now capable?

My solitude is totally dependent and yet it is path. I can survive in the tacit enabling the learning of the timeless and tathata – terms discussed [here](#). It is not the survival of Robinson Crusoe, the technology-compromised? solitude of Bob Kull, but it is a solitude because of a state of mind. There is a machismo that will laugh at my talk of solitude when I cannot grow plants, fix machines, not even cleaning my own house, but there is a state of mind that whilst giving back through the [website](#) has minimal detached relationships. Solitude helps me follow my path, and my path is controlled by my decisions as much as it can be. Will the decisions of others stop my solitude? No. It is not likely that the UK economy will be so bad that I will lose my pension, so much more will have to happen for all the UK old to lose pensions. Exchange rates have steadily fallen since I have retired but not enough to affect my solitude. My solitude can be disturbed by a necessitated moving of house - stable at the moment, but the real solitude is not the outside but inside and who has control of my life.

Bob has moved to the wilderness for a year but his solitude is not about wilderness alone because he responds to **"comply with requests from friends,**

family, and the university, I brought a satellite telephone” [\[RK pp632\]](#).

Following the path in viveka is restricted by these people “pulls”, restricted in your daily life by what is required to survive; viveka can be measured by the percentage of your daily life taken with requirements by others and by survival. The remaining percentage is your path developing Dhamma and dealing with upadana, the larger that percentage the greater the time for viveka. Bob spoke of people who had 0% for viveka because in their solitude they filled the contents of their consciousness – see interlude [\[RK pp540-570\]](#); for these people upadana filled the contents and path didn’t start.

Viveka is when you are developing Dhamma, quest in solitude as searching for the unknown can enable this.

"When I’m honest with myself, I admit that my intended destination for this journey — and my life — is enlightenment, whatever that is. I long to feel part of not only my family and society, but the universe. A high-flown notion, but when I hold it loosely, this destination creates a huge space for living. I notice, though, that I become uptight and unhappy when I focus too tightly on the destination and neglect the present moment” [≥\[RK p653\]](#).

This seems an appropriate time to discuss enlightenment, something I don't do, and there are some good thoughts here that can throw light on enlightenment – sorry! My story of enlightenment always refers back to a guy I met in Botswana who had spent his early adult years in a commune somewhere in Devon or Cornwall. Our discussion about it happened because I was able to find two people on the internet who were the leaders of the commune and had then later married; that pleased him. He was a drunk, and from occasional touchings into this commune time it appears that their purpose was some form of enlightenment; he had given up on it, considered himself a failure and seeing himself as a failure became a drunk. To him it had to be all or nothing. At that time I was rekindling my interest in the path with a [mid-life review](#) so it was interesting to discuss – for me not for him. Any discussion with him meant opening up the wound that he was a failure because he was not enlightened; I actually have no idea what he did to try to become enlightened because he wouldn't discuss it.

With the faith that happened last month (see [Investigating Faith](#)) I considered

stream-entry because what I felt matched the description – as discussed but there was no ideal, no target of enlightenment, that gave rise to sotapanna. My quest led to this faith that matched the description of sotapanna. In truth I have not embraced the meaning of that faith yet.

What is enlightenment? I wanted a definition to talk about and there was nothing satisfactory; here is something “The English term enlightenment is the western translation of the abstract noun bodhi, the knowledge or wisdom, or awakened intellect, of a Buddha”. Basically enlightenment is what the Buddha was. Is there a clear understanding of what the Buddha was? 24/7 bells and banjos. No comparable wisdom. Perfection. A brief brainstorm yields that. What kind of person wants to use those descriptions of themselves? What kind of ego? Even describing the possibility of stream-entry raises these kinds of questions, who am I to think this? But there is no I - anatta, the stream-entry matched, so maybe more examination is needed.

But as soon as stream-entry is mentioned there are words like arahant, then there are targets and immediately feelings of failure must arise. Are monks

given these sorts of targets? That just feels self-destructive to me. I get round that with the 4 Agreements – *doing the best I can*.

I get some of the same, feelings of targets and failure, in this quote. If Bob focuses on enlightenment he “become uptight and unhappy when I focus too tightly on the destination”. He admits that enlightenment is the purpose of his solitude, “my intended destination for this journey — and my life — is enlightenment, whatever that is”. But he doesn’t know what it is. Maybe this sense of perfectionism which has presented frustration throughout the book comes from a goal of enlightenment.

What is enlightenment? What do you feel when you are enlightened? How do you know when you are there? No wonder there is a sense of frustration, there are so many holes in trying to bring this into your life. Yet doing the best you can has no such holes. Your goal is immediate, it is not distant and foreboding, it is not perfect and impossible, it is just something we can all try to do – the best we can. So then all we need is the ability not to delude ourselves.

I look at the immediate scenario in my own work, I have warts&all. I need to chip away at these. I know things are getting better, I know I have a way to go, I am improving. So I am doing the best I can – maybe. But what is not done doesn't frustrate me because there is no desire for perfection. And then I can ask, is there complacency? And to avoid complacency I can focus on being humble, ending upadana, and grounding in nature. There is progress.

What does he mean wanting to be part of the universe – as if family? He has felt Unity, isn't that enough? Does he want it 24/7? I have feelings of Unity. Could they be more powerful? Could they be more self-embracing? Total immersion? Maybe. But I don't want to go chasing those experiences, chasing some form of total immersion. Is it possible? Is it meant to be? I have no idea. Should they be goals? If I set them as goals I am designing personal failure. If they were to happen – great, but what would it mean? That I was enlightened? No. It might mean I could try and delude myself that I was enlightened but I cannot imagine a situation in which I couldn't improve myself. So how can any such situation be enlightenment?

But this interests me. “when I hold it loosely, this destination creates a huge space for living”. Does this mean there is so much more I can be? A huge space for living? But on further reflection this also seems to have traps. If there is more I can do, why aren't I doing it? Why am I failing? This interpretation just leads to frustration and failure – dukkha. A huge space for living could mean that there is so much more I can do, but then does it mean there is so much more I should be doing? Am I meant to do it? Is it my path? So it brings me back to my path and doing the best I can.

Am I missing stuff about enlightenment? If I read about it, if I read about spiritual powers and what others can do, that is just another huge ego trap of comparison. I admire Bob in his solitude. I can't do it. Does that make him better than me? No – just different. Am I a better person than I was yesterday? Have I tried to follow my path? Have I made mistakes? Has there been too much upadana? For me these are the comparisons nature has given us this sankhara (mental process) for. Am I following my path and doing the best I can? That is what the mental process is for, not to compare with

someone else – your house, your bank balance, your arm candy, your dick?

These are the thoughts that considering enlightenment bring. This is dukkha if I cling, so I don't. It still remains a word I leave alone.

I liked this understanding of anatta even though it started in the opposite direction “Today I watched my thoughts trying to create the sense of a solid self. The dream is to establish that self and then not have to hustle anymore; not have to fake it; actually be really real. But the hoped for solidity is an illusory dream. The only way to be free from the hustle is to give up trying to create a solid self or solid social presence. This doesn't mean we disappear or stop being active, only that we can relax and let ourselves do whatever comes naturally without worrying about results. For the ego, this can be a truly scary idea” [[RK p661](#)]. But then the last word "idea" brought question; whilst anatta can be described as an idea, if it is understood and practised it has much deeper implications especially for ego. Insight is more than an idea, suitable for this description of anatta?

But my main purpose for including this quote was that I wanted to comment on a Buddhadasa teaching that helped me with anatta. How does this “being active” happen if there is no self? It comes from an understanding of the 5 khandhas, aggregates:-

rupa – body, vedana – feelings, sanna – memories and perceptions, sankhara – mental operations and processes and vinnana – consciousness.

If we think of ourselves doing “whatever comes naturally” then natural actions all fit into one of these aggregates; there is no action that cannot be described as khandha except for developing Dhamma – nature. To end upadana Buddhadasa talks of removing the I and mine from the 5 khandhas – no wonder this is “truly scary for the ego”.

Use of the word "idea" brings me to insight as opposed to idea. An insight comes from deep. Most of my insights come from meditation, and I am now doing some form of meditation prior to writing to try to make sure my writing is coming from Dhamma – Muse, and not some form of ego hidden but

clinging. Coming from deep is like saying it is part of panna – wisdom, a Dhamma comrade; it is like saying it comes from Eckhart’s stillness. Being an insight it is Dhamma, and it is not an idea or thought that floats in or out. Insight has tenure, a Dhammic internalisation; an idea on the other hand has no form of “residency”, it can arise and fall away often just floating around the surface of the mind only continued to be a current idea if it is clung to – ego. When there is an aha of insight, it is like a bell which says this is now part of Dhamma's wisdom.

Insight is a Dhammic process that internalises, that adds the insight to the wisdom. But once that process has happened the insight becomes an object, a thought, an idea. At this point the idea has the potential for clinging, and it is a risk of insight that the very power of the insight process makes us cling to the idea and hold on to the insight long after it is past its “sell-by date”.

Bob discusses insight and thinking here but not in the same way “There seems to be a thinking aspect to any Aha! insight. Thought may trigger that gestalt of apprehension, as well as solidify it. It’s a kind of dance to move in

and think in a directed way, and then, when my mind begins to tighten, move back and simply notice the thinking from afar. Then once there is some space and stillness, move back in again. I'm learning that thinking is an art form" [\[RK p662\]](#). It is not clear to me exactly what he is getting at. Is Bob suggesting that insight starts with thought that "triggers a gestalt of apprehension"? If he is it is not what I have described. For me the essence of an insight is that it comes from the stillness, Dhamma – Dhamma comrade of wisdom, and then in daily life shows as an idea. For myself this process was often how a blogpost would start. After meditation an insight maybe had arisen but it needed consolidating so I wrote the blogpost which then brought clarity and detail to the insight. The insight was coming into my mind, not coming from sankhara – a mental process or operation, the blogging was a processing of the insight. I don't have Bob's mind dance wrt insight.

Nor do I experience his mind dance in other ways, however "thinking from afar" makes me think of mindfulness – sati – non-judgemental awareness. Thoughts are not mine but are observed by mindfulness. Thoughts arise and fall away, come in and out of consciousness. Somehow thought gathering is a

mental operation associated with sankhara. It is as if there is a pool of thoughts that somehow come within range of my sankhara which mindfulness then sends consciousness to accept the thought or not. How often do thoughts arise that are heinous almost alien, they just don't belong? Mindfulness just lets those drift on by, "we are not our thoughts" – Eckhart says things like that. Bob's mind dance is a thought I don't grasp – mindfulness does not send consciousness to it.

Maybe Bob is talking of samadhi – concentration, a Dhamma comrade, because samadhi is concerned with focussing. Samadhi is not a Dhamma comrade well developed in me so I am unwilling to dismiss Bob's mind dance and note that I must look at Samadhi. In [MwB p86 of 161](#) developing samadhi is part of the 3rd tetrad. "Concentrating the mind means to train the mind so that it has good qualities and is ready to work"; he focuses on 3 qualities – samahito (stability, collectedness), parisuddho (purity), and kammaniyo (activeness, readiness). I need to work on these before I can comment further on Bob's mind dance

“For the ego, this can be a truly scary idea” [[RK_p661](#)]. I have already commented on the misuse of idea in this sentence but it leads to far more – more that is at the basis of the [Mandtao path](#). The quote above on anatta was a revelation, and Bob has been lucky enough to have a number of revelations although he has earned his luck through determination. The path is about revelation, revelation is spiritual. Ideas are not important, and cause problems when they are clung to – ditthupadana. Of course clinging to revelation can also lead to ditthupadana but the revelation has phala – the fruits of [dhammajati](#) for a purpose. This is nature telling us they matter. When we have an idea that is insight we get the eureka moment for a natural reason, it matters.

Historically we have lost the importance of revelation. I trace it back to Bacon that I called the Bacon-bit in [Mandtao's Hidden Axioms of Science](#). There was a schism in knowledge between revelation and reason, prior to the schism revelation and reason were accepted as known. At that time experiences were known, revelations were accepted as knowledge, and ideas were not given the exalted place academia now gives them. This description

of "that time" is a subjective fantasy because I have no actual idea as to how the relationship between experience revelation and reason actually played out in humans then. But there is a reality now that is a problem – effectively if there cannot be scientific verification neither revelation nor idea is real. How can a revelation be proven? As an aside I just realise that there might be a religious basis to the fake news and dismissal of science that dominates much of contemporary ignorance - the reclaiming of revelation, it might not be purely 1%-manipulation.

Prior to Bacon, revelation's place appeared more important - a supposition; in today's society revelation is often dismissed. Reasoning is a faculty of sankhara and is meant to be used, but when collectively we cling to the Church of Reason ([Pirsig's ZAMM](#)) demanding only proof without wisdom, then slowly the importance of revelation gets relegated. Again there is this niggle about the dismissal of science on the right, maybe deep within the whole heap of negativity that surrounds that dismissal there is also nature demanding the return of power to revelation. How frightening, I am discussing this when the demagogues spouting this fake news are so heinous

– lacking any compassion and decency. Whilst I want a return of power to revelation I want no association with these demagogues nor with the fire and brimstone also associated with the word revelation. Science is a step forward from the ignorance that is pure revelation, but in taking that step forward science and intellect have eschewed the importance of revelation and I source this collective ego with the schism of the Bacon-bit.

Revelation comes from the Dhamma, science is sourced in sankhara; both have their place. Revelation needs integrating into knowledge through appropriate reasoning but science needs to accept the path first. This is the eschewing by intellectual ego that I am getting at, there is no acceptance of path by science, revelation is dismissed through lack of proof, and we have lost the Dhamma, the importance of path as a result.

It feels scary that I am in a similar camp to the roots of the craziness that is Trump and perhaps even QAnon. I remember the FilmforAction [article](#) I didn't understand; when I read it I couldn't connect, maybe I can now? I am propounding that Dhamma move science forward into accepting revelation as

knowledge, the more egoic forces are trying to dismantle science.

In my life this Dhamma-evolving need for revelation has been highlighted in discussions of insight with intellectuals. Whilst some might find my vehemence threatening, insight never resorts to vitriol; the throwback from ego's survival being threatened by insight is usually insulting. Reason cannot understand insight because such an understanding would logically require the acceptance of the wisdom of the path and Dhamma. Whilst reason requires insight to be relegated to the level of idea/thought, insight demands through its process an acceptance of the path. The ego's survival instinct automatically lashes out with insults. And the people who have done this to me have been academics.

Insight and intellect are not easy bedfellows, they are in conflict, and this is no more obvious than in Buddhism. When you look at western involvement in Buddhism you see mental proliferation, thoughts upon thoughts, revisions, theories. The teaching is profound but simple, there is the path/Dhamma and there is ego/upadana, and the path is of nature and follows nature's laws –

idappaccayata-paticcasammupada:-

| <u>dhammajati idappaccayata</u> | <u>paticcasamuppada</u> |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. nature itself;2. the law of nature;3. the duties that must be performed according to that law of nature; and4. the fruits or benefits that arise from the performance of that duty. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">(1). With ignorance as a condition, mental concocting arises;(2). With mental concocting as a condition, consciousness arises;(3). With consciousness as a condition, mentality/materiality arises;(4). With mentality/materiality as a condition, the six sense bases arise;(5). With the six sense bases as a condition, contact arises;(6). With contact as a condition, feeling arises;(7). With feeling as a condition, craving arises;(8). With craving as a condition, attachment arises;(9). With attachment as a condition, becoming arises;(10). With becoming as a condition, birth arises;(11). With birth as a condition, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and tribulation arise. Thus the mass of suffering arises. |

Is everything else just ego proliferations and obfuscations?

If ideas do not know their place as thoughts for sankhara, then ideas and insights become confused. Recognising that the process of insight (revelation) is coming from the Dhamma means that we accept the insights (put faith in them?) and act accordingly. If there is a distortion of parity, or even worse a scientific dismissal of insight based on lack of verification, then finding the path becomes impossible because we miss the signs (dhammajati phala) nature gives us. This is the problem of academia, of intellectual ego, the lack of acceptance of insight, and the confusion over what is important. When you look at Bob's book you can see numerous insights and revelations; such insights are the basis of the path. Does Bob make them that basis? Does his academic requirement create an imbalance so that his intellectual ego blocks access to his path? Not questions for me!

What is the meaning of faith? In this section I started with query into the unknown and came up with faith, investigating faith in solitude is the next section. Bob has suggested books for this, and Sharon Salzberg has written one – look forward to this investigation. Is there more from Bob?

It seemed strange but bouncing off Bob has ended here. From this point on I just read his book, and there seemed no questioning that I wanted to engage with; I agreed with what he was saying - or he was talking of ducks. I have included some of what he said as quotes in an [appendix](#), the method of Viveka-Zandtao is bouncing off and not being discerning concerning quotes ie read his book.

Bob's [reentry_pp754-822](#) into society had no attraction for me as it revolved around his Ph D and not his journey. Then his final sentence was so sound "I continue to practice accepting the world as it is and not as I would like it to be. It is enough, and much more than enough."

What a great experience your book was, Bob, thank you so much. Bob's ["Solitude"](#) had a strong flavour of Pirsig's chautauqua in ZAMM and LILA. Watch this [clip](#) again, the book gives it greater feel.

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