

An account of one self

Dean Nugent

There Is Only Reality Itself.

It Is Self-Evidently The Case That Only Reality Itself Is –As “It” Is, Whatever and However “It” Is.

Reality Itself Inherently and Necessarily Includes The Totality That Is All That Is all-and-All...

The Universal Moral Law That Is Inherent to Reality Itself and Self-Evident in and As Reality Itself Is Universal Prior Unity (or Perfect Indivisibility) – Expressed by and as The Intrinsic Fundamental Imperative in every heart: “Locate no “other “ as “object” (or “not-self”), but identify and relate to all-and-All as “self” – not “different” from your Real (and Inherently egoless) Self-Nature, Self-Condition, and Self-State, and not separate from your own apparent space-time-“location” (or sphere of “point of view”).

Samraj Adi Da (2009, p.289)

In this brief autobiographical narrative I try to describe an earlier disposition toward a “spiritual” life, how this culminates in a “revelation” experience in my mid-30’s, and something of how I conceive of my work as a teacher educator in a university.

I have been a teacher educator for twenty-six years and for twenty-three of those years I have also been intensively involved in a contemplative way of life –The Reality-Way of Adidam. (This way of life involves an encounter with the ‘Reality’ that both includes and yet transcends the infinity of all possible ‘realities’. Hence the reason for capitalizing the word – in order to distinguish it from all changing ‘realities’ that we may perceive in any particular moment in time and space. As the quotation above indicates, there is a great moral law that accompanies the realization of this Reality.) Over the years I have been exploring how the contemplative life informs my practice as an adult educator and as someone working in a university.

This contemplative way of life has influenced my thinking about the role and function of the university. I have also been conceiving of my teaching work in the context of what some philosophers are referring to as the *post-secular* world.

Hans Joas suggests the term *post-secular* is a way of describing, “a many dimensioned change of attitude by the secular state or in the public domain with

respect to the continued existence of religious communities and the impulses that emerge from them” (cited in de Vries & Sullivan, 2006, p.3). How do knowledge-forms based on secular notions of reason and those that stem from religious notions of faith and revelation relate to each other? What shape can that take in the public domain of the university and how might it be affecting our approach to knowledge?

Who has seen the madness of this world?

Who is disenchanted enough with that madness to want to find a Spiritual Master?

For whom is this world so much of a dead-end that it cannot be accepted on its own terms, or for its own sake?

Where is someone for whom there must be a greater Reality — someone who will be utterly devoted to finding it?

Where are such people?

Samraj Adi Da (2006, p.53)

My first memory of a ‘spiritual’ kind occurred when I was about the age of four and I asked my mother where we came from. She replied that we came from ‘God’. I recall experiencing a ‘feeling-wondering’ about ‘God’. The strong sense of an unexplainable mystery that I felt at the time has always remained with me. Throughout my years of growing up, while I would be completely absorbed in the life experiences of the moment there would be times when I would be disturbed by the feeling-wondering about *what is happening here?*

My university studies were an intensive search to understand something – mainly amongst the humanities and social sciences. I studied philosophy, English literature, history and interdisciplinary studies and would ask my friends to report to me about what they were studying in other subjects, especially in politics, psychology and sociology. After university I studied to be a high school teacher—primarily as a means by which I could continue my search by travelling and living in different countries.

By 1988 I had been working as a teacher of adult educators for about three years when I was to experience a major moment of transformation. I encountered the teaching of Adi Da Samraj. I had begun to read a book of his entitled, *The Enlightenment of the Whole Body* (1979) and was immediately ‘re-situated’ relative to my point of view about existence. I would now describe that moment as a ‘revelation’. There were many dimensions to it – a whole bodily felt ‘shock’ and yet also feelings of a quiet heart-joy. I sensed a clarity about the ‘purpose’ of my life and I was deeply resonating for the first time with notions such as ‘faith’, ‘commitment’,

‘love’, ‘the Divine’ — all such terms were taking on a much greatly experienced meaning for me. I grasped the fullness of the function of the great teachers such as Siddhartha Gautama the Buddha or Jesus of Nazareth. A communication had occurred at a deep heart intuitive level. Prior to mind, I seemed to ‘know’. And I had found a Spiritual Master whose every word communicated deep understanding to me.

I am like the sunlight in the morning. I Intensify the light of morning until you Awaken. Until the Light Awakens you, even the Light of Consciousness Itself, you continue to dream, try to survive within the dream, manipulate yourself within the dream, pursue all kinds of goals, searches — none of which Awaken you.

Samraj Adi Da (2006, p. 20)

At first, I was extremely happy just to know that someone like this existed and was walking the earth in my lifetime. I did not entertain any thoughts of becoming a formal devotee student. However, I did take study courses about his teaching and one day I was informed that Adi Da Samraj was looking for students to take up a more intensive way of life and was asked if I was moved to participate. I had been feeling how my entire life had been a graceful process leading to him. I was experiencing (and still do) a fundamental happiness as well as a greater feeling sensitivity to the human condition and an understanding of Adi Da Samraj’s description of the ego as an unhappy act of separation and separateness. This act, or presumption, (which is what is keeping us from always consciously abiding in and as Reality Itself), and how it manifests in many levels of my life was being reflected to me.

I could not deny that I had found my Master even though I hadn’t been aware that I was even looking for him. I felt an overwhelming obligation in response to my recognition of him — felt at a deep heart-level, somehow. I agreed to take up more formal intensive study and to adapt to certain devotee practices relative to the mind, emotion, breath, and body. My life took on an unusual intensity of experience from the moment I made this commitment to him. A day could seem like a year. I was experiencing life at a much greater intensity. An important aspect of this was, as I say, reflective insights into the patterns of egoity or “self”-contraction.

Thus, I became a formal student and practitioner of the contemplative way of life offered by Adi Da Samraj and began a process of integrating my life as a teacher educator with my spiritual practice. This continues as an on-going developmental process. I have written elsewhere (Zepke, Nugent, & Leach, 2011) of some of the specific yogic practices I am involved with moment-to-moment and how these form a tacit basis to my teaching practice.

One of the understandings that has emerged for me is the human need for

‘sanctuary’ or ‘retreat’. An important observation Adi Da Samraj makes of the human condition is that there is a greater capacity for us to feelingly participate in life. To grow in our spiritual understanding and to allow the human heart to grow in its feeling capacity, an intimate life lived cooperatively with others is to be recommended – hence the traditions of ashrams and monasteries and also more general traditional ways of living interdependently. I have lived in such a circumstance for twenty years. I live and work in effectively two different types of “university”: the AUT University and The Reality-Way of Adidam. The Adidam Spiritual Centre where I live is set aside as a place of retreat and a way of life dedicated to growing beyond the limiting patterns of egoity in the company of others.

It is interesting to note that the Christian concept of the “contemplative life” was partly built on the Aristotelian concept of “leisure”. The Greek word for “leisure” (which has a very different connotation from our modern notion of “leisure”) is σκολη– the origin of “school”. Thus, the English word for our institutions of education and learning is rooted in the ancient Greek concept of “leisure”, or contemplation. Aristotle stated that, “We are *not-at-leisure* in order to *be-at-leisure*”. Or, in more conventional English, “We are *at work* in order to be *at contemplation*”. Interestingly, the ancient Greek language did not have a word for “work”, but rather simply the negative term ασκολια (“not-leisure”). The Catholic philosopher Josef Pieper (1950) has written a masterful consideration of how such a notion of “leisure” is the foundation of depthful human culture (versus our modern superficial notions of “householder-consumer-worker”). As he writes, “Leisure is the disposition of receptive understanding, of contemplative beholding, and immersion – in the real” (p.31).

Aspects of the Adidam contemplative way of life I bring to my conventional pedagogy. I conceive of the space for learning that I try to create as retreat-like—a space that allows the human heart to open (not closed or defended by the stress of threatened existence); for the being to be at rest; for heart-connectedness with others to be felt; for understanding to be allowed to arise. I also associate this kind of public learning space as rooted in earlier traditional understandings of ‘school’, of the ‘university’, and of the *academic* (derived from Plato’s school in *Ακαδημια*).

From my point of view, although the modern university is primarily committed to forms of knowledge that develop and serve particular professions, I contend that the need for a consideration of greater forms of understanding and wisdom-knowledge in the public sphere can scarcely be disputed in this time.

Thus, I look to allow such wisdom understanding to guide my own acts in life and work.

References:

Adi Da, S. (1978). *The enlightenment of the whole body*. Middletown, California: The Dawn Horse Press.

Adi Da, S. (2006). *The ancient walk-about way*. Middletown, California: The Dawn Horse Press.

Adi Da, S. (2009). *Not-two is peace* (3 ed.). Middletown, California: The Dawn Horse Press.

de Vries, H., & Sullivan, L. E. (Eds.). (2006). *Political theologies*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Pieper, J. (1998). *Leisure the basis of culture* (G. Malsbary, Trans.). South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press.

Zepke, N., Nugent, D., & Leach, L. (Eds.). (2011). *Reflection to transformation* (Revised 2 ed.). Wellington, New Zealand: Dunmore Press. (to be published June 2011)