



Beyond Secularism

These days a lot of people accept without question the materialist view that all aspects of the mind are dependent on the body. Yet most people also claim a rationality independent of feeling within their experience. The latter, however, is coming under question more and more. The psychologists are developing models of the embodied mind – there is the attempt to bring mind and body together, or body and spirit, and overcome all the fake dualities of the past. In this way we can overcome the illusion of a thinking or feeling mind independent of the body and materiality. We can look for such a non-dual integrated experience of ourselves, thinking in and through our body. This may be all well and good when it leads to a sensitive, virtuous, empathic mind but what about death. Are we also to accept that if the mind and body are so intertwined that there is nothing that survives death? Is this perhaps an end to religion in the traditional sense?

The Buddha fully acknowledges both the dependence of the mind on the body and the impermanence of the body. These two things are central to the teaching. The Buddha agrees that nothing that is born avoids death but says that there is also that which is not born that does not die – the Deathless. To discover the deathless is the whole aim of the spiritual path. Secular Buddhism fits very well as the first part of such a path but not with the culmination of this path. A non-dual view of life can be the way to bring all our subjective experience together. Then, staying with the body and thus seeing the impermanence of it all, we can let it all go and actually realise the Deathless.

So, what is the Deathless as an experience? It's the brightest, most blissful space you ever did see. The insights that come to our peaceful hearts, as if from heaven, and take us to that space, are so simple: “There is only knowing,” and then, within this non-dual state, “there is only suffering arising.”

I offer this for your reflection.

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