

## True spirituality

The first attempt to define spiritual life in psychological terms was perhaps when William James wrote, '*The Varieties of Religious Experience*'. In modern times this redefinition has become the norm and in my view represents a force, that has largely been hidden, in the secularisation of religion. In Buddhism the insight process particularly is being redefined in these terms. The experience of *samādhi*, from which insight arises, is poorly understood and seldom practised, many times it is even rejected or criticised.

At its best the situation reminds me a bit of 'Star Trek'. The exploration of the inner space, *to go where no man has gone before*, is led by the dialogue between the passionate Captain Kirk and his logical companion Dr. Spock.

Largely, however, what we see is Buddhism drifting into the same disputes as the rest of the Western world. The thinkers argue with the feelers about which is right or more important. What is most seldom realised is that there is another dimension to the mind altogether – a spiritual one. Still the vocabulary hardly exists to describe and explore such true spirituality. There are few words even to describe an overall state of being or Gestalt. The common vocabulary describes different aspects and misses the whole. In expressing ourselves we hence tend to miss the wood for the trees.

There is a sense, however, in which our own obsession with self-expression and understanding is at the root of the problem. We can be delving around inside ourselves in murky thoughts and feelings, but if we looked out at the world we live in, the real issues of our existence – most importantly, perhaps, the uncertainty of it all – would be staring us straight in the face. To me our inner obsession needs replacing with a genuine ability to take such existential issues in and respond accordingly. That is the true spirituality that opens our minds to a new dimension beyond self-concern. We resolve inner suffering through a new kind of relationship with the outer world. We see the uncertainty of it all, let go and holiday.



I offer this for your reflection.

Ajahn Kalyāno

<http://www.openthesky.co.uk>