



Ausculta

White Robed Monks  
of St. Benedict

# Network News

Volume 12, Issue 1

May 15, 2008

*Nondual: things remain distinct  
while not being separate.*

## Abbot's Notes

Peace be with you and yours.

The USA is in its quadrennial presidential election cycle. We have a fine opportunity to witness how our belief systems can get in the way of apprehending reality, *i.e.*, that which actually is in itself (rather than as we perceive or make it up to be). We also can witness how others as well as we ourselves react (without nary a thought) or respond (with insight) to alleged politically charged events.

Those of us in the Christian tradition are familiar with the Nicene Creed which begins with: *I believe*, in Latin *Credo*. Etymologically *to believe* connotes *I trust in* — a matter of heart. Its current connotation reflects a matter of mental ascent even at times in spite of what common sense might suggest is actually the case. Let us take the current understanding as the base of our reflection.

The base of our reflection is a line from the accompanying lengthy excerpt (offered by Sumon & Shuster): *...for the human brain has a propensity to reject any belief that is not in accord with one's own view. However, each person also has the biological power to interrupt detrimental, derogatory beliefs & generate new ideas.* Neurologically, we are in charge of the beliefs we have created either directly or indirectly, *i.e.*, that we have allowed ourselves to form within our neurological systems. Our beliefs are just beliefs—nothing more and nothing less—that we have encoded in our neurological circuits.

People may feel anxious, mad or glad when their candidate wins or loses.

The intention of this specific newsletter is to bring to mind/heart our inherent re-

sponsibility for our own personal integrity. We ground our integrity—the keeping of our Word—in our belief systems, *i.e.*, what we believe. What we might think our Word is, might not be what actually it is, given our behavior. How we behave is the direct mirror of what our actual belief is: our belief about our own self, another, life, even God by what ever name or no name. How we treat others and ourselves images what we actually believe about ourselves/other.

Any discussion about beliefs would be incomplete without mention of one key aspect of the human condition which is a source of much unnecessary pain and suffering: **narcissism**. *The more you are like me the better we will get along.*

In marriage how often does the man unconsciously try to get the women to just accept and let go of the past and/or does the woman unconsciously try to get the man to really care — when in reality, males tend not to care (as females care) and females tend to hold on to events (as males let them go)? We want to believe we are the same when in reality we are just different. Compassion is recognizing we are just different and hence the same and not so much to let go as much as to just let be.

In this political season, let us witness our own dynamic: question what we believe, who taught us that belief, what was our motivation to allow ourselves to believe thusly? Please, not only purchase *Born to Believe*, but also open it, and read it with an aware, and open mind/heart.  
**Be Peace.** Thank you.

Enjoy the Merry Dance of Life.  
Peace and joy!  
+Robert OSB

## Born to Believe

### *Born to Believe: God, Science, and the Origin of Ordinary and Extraordinary Beliefs*

By Andrew Newberg, M.D. and  
Mark Robert Waldman  
ISBN-10: 0-7432-7498-9

#### Chapter 1

#### The Power of Belief

Mr. Wright wasn't expected to live through the night. His body was riddled with tumors, his liver and spleen were enlarged, his lungs were filled with fluid, and he needed an oxygen mask to breathe. But when Mr. Wright heard that his doctor was conducting cancer research with a new drug called Krebiozen, which the media were touting as a potential miracle cure, he pleaded to be given treatments. Although it was against protocol, Dr. Klopfer honored Mr. Wright's request by giving him an injection of the drug, then left the hospital for the weekend, never expecting to see his patient again. But when he returned on Monday morning, he discovered that Mr. Wright's tumors had shrunk to half their original size, something that even radiation treatments could not have accomplished.

"Good God!" thought Dr. Klopfer. "Have we finally found the silver bullet -- a cure for cancer?" Unfortunately, an examination of the other test patients showed no changes at all. Only Mr. Wright had improved. Was this a rare case of spontaneous remission, or was some other unidentified mechanism at work? The doctor continued to give injections to his recovering patient, and after ten days practically all signs of the disease had disappeared. Wright returned home, in perfect health.

Two months later, the Food and Drug Administration reported that the experiments with Krebiozen were proving ineffective. Mr. Wright heard about the reports and immediately became ill. His tumors returned, and he was readmitted to the hospital. Now, Dr. Klopfer was convinced that the patient's belief in the drug's effectiveness had originally healed him. To test his theory, he decided to lie, telling Mr. Wright about a "new, super-refined, double-strength product" that was guaranteed to produce better results. Mr. Wright agreed to try this "new" version of what he believed had healed his tumors before, but in reality, Dr. Klopfer gave him injections of sterile water.

#### Special point of insight: [www.6seconds.org](http://www.6seconds.org)

\*\*\*\*\*  
Appreciation is the anti-stress feeling. When you feel gratitude, acceptance, or appreciation, your brain chemistry shifts away from GRRR toward Ahhh.

**Experiment:** Think of someone with whom you're annoyed. Identify 10 of that person's great qualities and behaviors. Focus on this list attempting to fill yourself the feeling of appreciation/gratitude.  
Now consider the issue that was irritating you - do you have new perspective?

### In this Issue

<b>Abbot's Notes</b>	1
<b>Born to Believe</b>	1-5
<b>Reality is</b>	5
<b>The world is</b>	5
<b>Detaching a Belief</b>	6
<b>Donation</b>	6

## Born to Believe (con't)

Once again, Mr. Wright's recovery was dramatic. His tumors disappeared, and he resumed his normal life -- until the newspapers published an announcement by the American Medical Association under the headline "Nationwide Tests Show Krebiozen to Be a Worthless Drug in Treatment of Cancer."

After reading this, Mr. Wright fell ill again, returned to the hospital, and died two days later. In a report published in the *Journal of Projective Techniques*, Dr. Klopfer concluded that when the power of Wright's optimistic beliefs expired, his resistance to the disease expired as well.

Each year, thousands of cases of remarkable recoveries are described, and although such "miracles" are often attributed to the power of faith and belief, the majority of scientists are skeptical of such claims. In the medical literature, spontaneous remissions -- at least when cancer is involved -- are extremely rare. Estimates range from one case in 60,000 to one in 100,000, although a definitive overview of the topic argues that perhaps one patient in 3,000 experiences a spontaneous remission. Moreover, the majority of oncologists believe that an unidentified biological mechanism is at work rather than a true miracle; and current hypotheses favor alterations in the body's cellular, immunological, hormonal, and genetic functioning over psychological mechanisms. But Mr. Wright's case is unique -- and one of the few to be documented during a university research project. The remissions of his cancer have been attributed to the effects of his mind on the biological functioning of his body -- in other words, on the biology of belief.

Hundreds of mind-body experiments have been conducted -- including placebo studies and research on the power of meditation and prayer -- but few scientists have attempted to explain the underlying biology of belief. We have volumes of comprehensive statistics about the kinds of beliefs we hold, but our understanding of how and why belief "works" is still in its infancy, and most conclusions are still controversial.

Fortunately, recent discoveries about the ways the brain creates memories, thoughts, behaviors, and emotions can provide a new template with which to examine the how and why of belief. What I will propose in this book is a practical model of how the brain works that will help you understand your own beliefs and the nature of reality. It will

also help you see how all beliefs emerge from the perceptual processes of the brain, and how they are shaped by personal relationships, societal influences, and educational and spiritual pursuits. This understanding can then help us to discern the difference between destructive and constructive beliefs, skills that are essential if we are to adequately address important individual, interpersonal, and global problems.

Beliefs govern nearly every aspect of our lives. They tell us how to pray and how to vote, whom to trust and whom to avoid; and they shape our personal behaviors and spiritual ethics throughout life. But once our beliefs are established, we rarely challenge their validity, even when faced with contradictory evidence. Thus, when we encounter others who appear to hold differing beliefs, we tend to dismiss or disparage them. Furthermore, we have a knee-jerk tendency to reject others who are not members of our own group. Even when their belief systems are fundamentally similar to ours, we still feel that they are significantly different. For example, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam all embrace similar notions of God, yet according to one poll nearly one-third of Americans believe that each of these religious groups worships a different deity. Even though a close investigation of the world's religions will show that the majority of human beings share similar ethical values, we tend to ignore the similarities and focus on the discrepancies. Ignorance is only partly to blame. A more significant reason is that our brains are instinctually prone to reject information that does not conform to our prior experience and knowledge. Simply put, old beliefs, like habits, die hard.

This book is also about our biological quest for meaning, spirituality, and truth. If we understand the neuropsychology of the brain, our beliefs will be able to grow and change as we interact with others who have different views of the world. It is my hope that as we become better believers, we will exercise greater compassion in our search for meaning and truth.

The study of human beliefs often raises unsettling issues, since most people are not aware that many of our beliefs are based on incomplete assumptions about the world. How, then, can beliefs be so powerful that they can heal us, or so destructive that they can cause us to suffer and die? This question has haunted philosophers, theologians, and politicians for a long time, and I myself have struggled to answer it for most of my medi-

cal career. For me, it all began with my own questions about the nature of reality and God.

### Reality, Dreams, and Beliefs

As a teenager, I often wondered why people believed certain things. Some of my friends believed in God while others did not, but no one could give a strong enough argument to change anyone else's mind. Similar stalemates occurred when our conversations touched on issues of evolution, the origin of the universe, or more captivating topics such as basketball and girls. For the most part, our opinions (except for those about girls) never changed. In our debates, it didn't even matter what the facts were; if they didn't support our beliefs, we dismissed them. Nonetheless, I was never certain about what I should or shouldn't believe, because both sides seemed to have valid points. I knew that there was always some study, tucked away in a forgotten crevice at the library, that could support even the most outrageous claim.

By the time I finished high school, I began to think that I would never be able to know what was true or false. I even used to wonder, as teenagers are prone to do, if the world itself was real. Maybe everything was nothing more than a dream. In college, I came across the following poem paying homage to a Chinese sage born 300 years before Jesus:

Chuang Tzu dreamed he was a butterfly.  
What joy, floating on the breeze. Without a  
thought of who he was.

When Chuang Tzu awoke, he found himself confused. "Am I a man who dreamed I was a butterfly? Or am I a butterfly, dreaming that I am a man? Perhaps my whole life is but a moment in a butterfly's dream!"

So I was not alone in my ruminations about reality. When I discovered that many physicists also doubt that we will ever know the true nature of the universe, I began to wonder how anyone could trust his or her beliefs. For that matter, why did people believe in anything at all? What is this impulse to believe?

Eventually, I realized that if I was to have any hope of understanding why people believe what they do, I would have to study the part of us that actually does the believing -- the human mind -- for no matter what we see, feel, think, or do, it must all be proc-

## Born to Believe (con't)

essed through the brain. After years of study, I have come to see that a profound chasm exists between the world "out there" and our internal consciousness, and that this fundamental disconnection prevents us from ever truly "knowing" reality. Still, we seem to have little choice but to trust our neural perceptions.

We are born to believe because we have no other alternative. Because we can never get outside ourselves, we must make assumptions -- usually lots of them -- to make sense of the world "out there." The spiritual beliefs we adhere to and the spiritual experiences we can have are also influenced by our neural circuitry and its limitations. God may exist, but we could experience God -- or anything else, for that matter -- only through the functioning of our brains.

In my previous book, *Why God Won't Go Away*, I began to address our perception of God and other spiritual beliefs by studying the brain processes that occur during meditation, prayer, and spiritual experiences. My research, conducted with my late colleague Eugene d'Aquili at the University of Pennsylvania, suggests that we are naturally calibrated to have and embrace spiritual perceptions by the neurological architecture of our minds. But every individual also seems to have an abiding need to construct moral, spiritual, and scientific beliefs that explain the workings of the universe. So a belief itself is a fundamental, essential component of the human brain. As we evolved, beliefs, even superstitious ones, allowed our ancestors to make sense out of an incomprehensible, dangerous world. Their assumptions may not have been accurate, but their beliefs reduced their fears and imparted values that would facilitate group cohesiveness.

### Prejudice, Skepticism, and Doubt

The propensity to believe that other people's values are misguided has fostered centuries of animosity throughout the world. When the early Christian missionaries first observed shamanic rituals practiced by indigenous tribes outside Europe, they usually thought of these rites as the devil's work. They believed that punishment and conversion were essential for the salvation of the natives' souls. The French Franciscan priest André Thevet, when visiting Brazil in 1557, noted in his diary:

I cannot cease to wonder how it is that in a land of law and police, one allows to proliferate like filth a bunch of old witches who

put herbs on their arms [and] hang written words around their necks...to cure fevers and other things, which are only true idolatry, and worthy of great punishment.

How would such priests react today if they were to wander down the aisles of an American health-food store filled with exotic tinctures and herbal preparations? The sheer numbers of Protestants alive would no doubt make them long for another Inquisition.

Neurologically, such prejudice seems rooted in human nature, for the human brain has a propensity to reject any belief that is not in accord with one's own view. However, each person also has the biological power to interrupt detrimental, derogatory beliefs and generate new ideas. These new ideas, in turn, can alter the neural circuitry that governs how we behave and what we believe. Our beliefs may be static, but they aren't necessarily static. They can change; we can change them. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the workings of a child's mind, which is constantly struggling to develop and maintain a stable worldview. Furthermore, children's and adults' belief systems are continually being altered by other people's beliefs.

The adult human brain is childlike in another way: we automatically assume that what other people tell us is true, particularly if the idea appeals to our deep-seated fantasies and desires. Advertisers often take advantage of this neural tendency, and even though consumer advocates and some laws have helped to level the playing field, the general rule "Buyer beware" still prevails. Magazine covers and full-page ads promise instant beauty, fabulous sex, and intimate communication in five easy steps, and we believe them, often ignoring obvious deceit. One ad I recently saw -- in a popular science magazine, no less -- promised the reader a complete aerobic workout "in exactly four minutes": a medical impossibility, at least from the standpoint of cardiovascular health. So how does the advertiser get away with this? Through a definitional loophole. Technically, "aerobic" simply means that a certain activity provides oxygen to the system, so any movement -- even rolling around in bed -- would bring oxygen to any muscle that moves. There is little health benefit to this, but the ad tricks you into thinking that you get the same benefits as if you had exercised vigorously for twenty minutes or longer. Furthermore, the advertisers like this one are preying on many people's propensity to want quick, efficient

solutions that require little effort.

Food manufacturers present their products in similar ways. For example, many labels state that the ingredients in a product are "all natural." As far as the Food and Drug Administration is concerned, this simply means that the product contains no metal, plastic, or other synthetic material. "Natural" does not mean "healthy" or "organic," but as advertisers know, such pseudoscientific jargon can dramatically increase a product's sales.

We are born with a natural tendency to trust what others say, and we certainly can't take the time to question every piece of information we receive. Think how long it would take to verify even half the claims that are made in just a single magazine. So what are we to do?

One thing we can do is train ourselves to become more vigilant and cautious. Adopt a skeptical, open-minded attitude. I'm not recommending that you become a pessimist -- unfortunately, many people incorrectly equate skepticism with pessimism, doubt, and disbelief. Philosophical skepticism dates back to the time of Plato, who established the first school of "academics," teaching that the world could not be known objectively or precisely. The academics also believed that the true nature of God could never be fully known. Thus a skeptic is simply a person who chooses to examine carefully whether his or her beliefs are actually true. A skeptic keeps an open mind -- a willingness to consider both sides of an argument. In reality, we need a healthy dose of skepticism, open-mindedness, and trust, especially when it comes to those beliefs of our own that affect another person's life. This is particularly important with regard to assumptions we make in medicine and science, and it is also important when we are addressing moral, political, and religious issues. Trust and open-mindedness without some skepticism can get us into trouble, but skepticism without trust can undermine our ability to believe what we need to in order to survive. Each has its benefits and risks. For example, as Carl Sagan once pointed out, the business of skepticism can threaten the status quo:

Skepticism challenges established institutions. If we teach everybody, including, say, high school students, habits of skeptical thought, they will probably not restrict

## Born to Believe (con't)

their skepticism to UFOs, aspirin commercials, and 35,000-year-old channelees. Maybe they'll start asking awkward questions about economic, or social, or political, or religious institutions. Perhaps they'll challenge the opinions of those in power. Then where would we be?

Although Sagan was being ironic, skepticism can be taken too far. It can cause us to reject out of hand new ideas that, on the surface, seem improbable or weird. It can also lead to cynicism, a state in which one constantly doubts the sincerity and validity of another person's point of view. And this, as every psychiatrist and cardiologist knows, can lead to anger, bitterness, contempt, hostility, and depression. In the long run, the hormonal and neurological changes caused by these emotional states can seriously compromise physical health.

How, then, do we know whom, or what, to trust? And how do we keep an open mind, particularly when we encounter claims that contradict our personal experience and faith? Science explains that the universe is billions of years old, and that human beings and chimpanzees have evolved from a common ancestor, but reactions to this information still range from skepticism and cynicism to open-mindedness and acceptance. It is not easy to challenge assumptions that have prevailed for hundreds, even thousands, of years.

### Science, Medicine, and Faith

In medical research, I feel it is wise to be skeptical about new treatments because we are dealing with people's health and lives. I need to see a good amount of persuasive evidence and data before I'm comfortable trying a new procedure. However, my skepticism can ultimately lead to my becoming open-minded and trying a new treatment, which can lead to better health for my patients. If I were to apply this clinical skepticism to everything, I'd be living in a constant state of doubt, which is a very inefficient way to live on a day-to-day basis. Marriage is a perfect example: at some point in every intimate relationship we have to abandon our doubts and believe that our partner will continue to be trustworthy in the future. In other words, we have to have faith in ourselves, and in other people with whom we interact regularly, especially those we love.

Mr. Wright had to have faith in his doctor, and Dr. Klopfer had to have faith in the

power of his patient's belief. Such faith transcends reason, rationality, and skepticism, and has the power to heal, but there is nothing magical about it. In fact, you can evoke placebo effects in mice and other animals. The truth and measurability of the placebo effect allow us to begin to trace the neurophysiology of belief. Essential elements in the construction of any type of belief include the mechanisms of perception, appraisal, attention, emotion, motivation, conditioning, expectancy -- and, in the case of human beings, verbal suggestion. Fear, anxiety, and doubt also contribute to the placebo effect, but in a negative way, creating disbelief that can interfere with the healing processes of the body. In Mr. Wright's case, we can see both types of belief operating in profoundly powerful ways. Without any evidence or proof, he became convinced, beyond reason, that he would survive, and this strongly held expectation seemed to play a significant role in reversing the progress of his disease. Most likely, his brain sent out chemical signals that stimulated his immune system, in ways that we are just beginning to understand. Then, when he read reports that the medication didn't work, his emotional despair, coupled with the negative belief that he was bound to die, turned off his immune response and simultaneously released a flood of stress-related hormones, some of whose effects we do understand.

Other factors probably played essential roles in the roller-coaster course of his cancer. For example, studies have found that injections of harmless substances -- even water -- can trigger the suppression of tumors in rats (this is known as a learned immunosuppression response), but there is also evidence that these conditioned rats have a weaker ability to resist tumors that occur at a later date. This may indicate that our positive beliefs might help to postpone the inevitable decline of health. To me, this is an amazing finding, for if future research supports this hypothesis with humans, it means that, one day, we might learn how to control our minds to extend both the quality and the quantity of our lives.

It is also my conviction that the more we understand the biological underpinnings of belief, the easier it will be for a person to come to a middle ground between blind trust and the blanket rejection of anything that seems foreign or strange. However, we will still be faced with the problem that we cannot get outside our brains to know what reality is, and so we must live with the paradox that there may be no clear delineation between fantasy and truth.

### Do All Living Organisms Hold Beliefs?

What about other creatures? Do they, like humans, have beliefs? It depends on the kind of brain they have. Recent studies have revealed that primates and other animals do form rudimentary beliefs about their world. For example, many wild creatures can be trained to trust a human being, and this demonstrates their ability to form new assumptions about their environment. Dogs, for example, will sit expectantly by the front door for hours, waiting for their owners to return. In fact, most canines are inveterate, optimistic believers in the goodwill of their masters. My dogs can even anticipate the time of day when I am supposed to return home, and will begin to react by barking the moment I call to let my family know that I'm on my way. At any other time of day, they do not bark when the phone rings. Biologically speaking, this illuminates the processes of belief that are involved in maintaining faith about a projected future event.

Even the behavior of single-celled creatures can be conditioned and changed. When an amoeba is gently shocked with an electric probe, for instance, it becomes more hesitant when exploring its surroundings: it no longer assumes that the world "out there" is safe. In a manner of speaking, you might say that the otherwise trusting amoeba becomes a skeptic. If the shocks continued, it would probably turn into a hermit, retreating from its environment until it died. If you think this scenario sounds too improbable, consider the *Dictyostelium discoideum*, which biologists affectionately call the social amoeba. This little creature exhibits what appear to be moral behaviors, for it engages in cooperative activities that involve both cheating and altruism. If enough evidence is gathered to support the view that cells and genes can independently and cooperatively make decisions that affect their own future survival, then the answer is yes -- every living organism has beliefs.

What about rock? It has no nervous system or cells, but is there even a remote possibility that the smallest subatomic particles of the universe could have some form of self-volition, consciousness, or belief, which would then suggest that the universe itself is a form of life? Most quantum physicists would say no. However, a few respected theoreticians and physicists believe that it is impossible to separate consciousness from the physical world, and that a profound interconnectedness exists between all aspects of the organic and inorganic world. For ex-

## Born to Believe (con't)

ample, the Gaia hypothesis proposes that every aspect of the environment on Earth cooperates in a self-regulating way to maintain an internal and external balance. There is even a mathematical theory explaining how two species of daisies can regulate the global temperature of our planet.

Interestingly, the notion that inanimate objects have a kind of consciousness is reflected in the myths and spirituality of many indigenous cultures. Believing that everything -- rocks, trees, and the heavens above -- has consciousness, they feel more connected to the mysterious world out there. Charles Alexander Eastman, who was a Santee Sioux and a physician, expressed this when he wrote, in 1911, about the continuing annihilation of the Native Americans' way of life:

We believed that the spirit pervades all creation and that every creature possesses a soul in some degree, though not necessarily a soul conscious of itself. The tree, the waterfall, the grizzly bear, each is an embodied Force, and as such an object of reverence. The Indian...had not yet charted the vast field of nature or expressed her wonders in terms of science. With his limited knowledge of cause and effect, he saw miracles on every hand -- the miracle of life in seed and egg, the miracle of death in a lightning flash and in the swelling deep!

Science cannot yet verify the existence of consciousness beyond the brain, but we do

### What do I believe Reality to be ...

From *The Quantum and the Lotus* by Ricard & Thuan (ISBN 1-4000-8079-7) we find physicist Bohm summarizing the conversation of Quantum Mechanics/Particle Physics thusly:

**Reality is what we take to be true.**  
**What we take to be true is what we believe.**  
**What we believe is based upon our perceptions.**  
**What we perceive depends upon what we look for.**  
**What we look for depends on what we think.**  
**What we think depends on what we perceive.**  
**What we perceive determines what we believe.**  
**What we believe determines what we take to be true.**  
**What we take to be true is our reality. (p. 121.)**

Who forms the belief?  
Who decides?  
Who is responsible for one's integrity?

have evidence that such beliefs can generate a sense of peace and equanimity within the brain: the more connected we feel with the world, the more empathy we express toward others. This sense of connection may even be neurologically essential for the development of moral ideals.

To summarize, our beliefs serve myriad purposes that help us to flourish and survive:

- \* •They help us to organize the world in meaningful ways.
- \* •They give us our sense of ourselves.
- \* •They help us take action in specific ways.
- \* •They allow us to accomplish our goals.
- \* •They help to regulate the emotional centers of the brain.
- \* •They allow us to socialize with others.
- \* •They guide us in our moral and educational pursuits.
- \* •They heal our bodies and minds.

Beliefs can also be used to suppress others, to justify immoral acts, or to propel us toward sadistic acts. But if we so choose, they can also connect us with transcendent dimensions of experience, be it seen through religion, science, or the innate curiosity of a child's imagination. Most important, they can give us inspiration and hope, essential tools for confronting those moments of confusion and doubt that are so often part of life.

Copyright © 2006 by Andrew Newberg, MD, and Mark Robert Waldman

### What do I believe the World to be ...

Adapted from [http://www.noetic.org/research/files/Bleep\\_Study\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.noetic.org/research/files/Bleep_Study_Guide.pdf)

#### WORLD AS BATTLEFIELD

The world as a battlefield, where good and evil are pitted against each other and the forces of light battle the forces of darkness. One is fighting God's battle and that ultimately s/he will win. W. I. Thompson called this kind of certainty and self-righteousness *the apartheid of good*.

#### WORLD AS CLASSROOM

The world is a classroom, a kind of moral gymnasium where one is put through certain tests which prove one's mettle and certain lessons, so one can graduate to other rewards. Whether a battlefield or classroom, the world is a proving ground, with little worth beyond that. What counts is our immortal souls,

### What do I believe the World to be...

which are being tested here. For the sake of one's soul, one is ready to destroy." These two views are strong among monotheistic religions we well as agnostics who can also fall prey to this way of thinking when they become militant or self-righteous. Fundamentalism has both religious and secular adherents.

#### WORLD AS TRAP

Here the view to and escape from this messy world and ascend to a supra-plane. This stance is based on a hierarchical view of reality, where mind is seen as higher than matter and spirit is set over and above nature. This view encourages contempt for the material plane. The Western worldview was based on this metaphor, with the trap being the illusion that the phenomenal world is real. To know truth one must directly apprehend the eternal, transcendent Platonic ideas or forms. These perfect forms are unchanging, a welcome relief from the overwhelming flux and chaos of the world.

#### WORLD AS MACHINE

AKA modernity, the world is viewed as a collection of inanimate interacting in mechanistic ways based on mathematical laws (ie Newtonian physics). Introduced in the discontinuity between mind & matter, the subjective & objective, & ultimately between science & religion. Over centuries of struggle between a rising tide of empiricists who battled against an entrenched theology, an uneasy truce developed. Science claimed the domain of the physical world, religion claimed the domain of the mental world.

#### WORLD AS LOVER

The world is beheld as a most intimate and gratifying partner. In Hinduism we find some of the richest expressions of our erotic relationship with the world. One feel oneself embraced in the primal erotic play of life. Found in Ancient Goddess religions, strains of Sufism and the Kabbalah and Christianity in its tradition of bridal mysticism.

#### WORLD AS SELF

The world as lover is a complement to the world as self. The subject (the lover) and object (the beloved) are no longer separate. The world is an interconnected whole and each individual a node in a living web of life such as in general systems theory, complexity science, and quantum physics. Mind is immanent in nature, extending far beyond the spans of our individual conscious purpose. ....

*any or all as we would like to believe....*

**White Robed Monks  
of St. Benedict**

PO Box 27536  
San Francisco CA 94127-0536

Phone: 415-292-3228

E-mail: porter@whiterobedmonks.org

[www.whiterobedmonks.org](http://www.whiterobedmonks.org)

**Moving or recently moved?  
Please visit  
<http://www.wrmosb.org/update>  
Thank you.  
(New e-mail address, too.)**



  
**Peace and Joy!**

**How to Detach from a Belief—Why?**

How to detach from a belief and experience freedom and peace of mind? Use a centering meditation taught by Tarthang Tulku in his *Hidden Mind of Freedom*:

"Working with thoughts (beliefs) by opening them as they arise can bring many pleasant feelings, which—without attachment—also become our meditation. We can even go into the thoughts that judge other thoughts, and, embracing this judging mind, become united with it."

"By relying on the light of awareness you can see that the difficulties you face are manifestations of your own concepts. Going deeply into your thoughts, you will see how you create your experience, how you alone are the judge who determines heaven and hell, good and bad."

"Whatever experience arises, stay with it, expand it, and heat it up. If you remain within the intense

core of the experience, the meditator unites with thoughts and emotions, and everything dissolves. Then awareness grows powerful and one-pointed. As thoughts and emotions are increasingly included within this field of awareness, they become more useful. Instead of being a cause of frustration or confusion, they become agents of well-being. . . ."

And why?

A Native American grandfather was talking to his grandson about how he felt. He said, "I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One wolf is the vengeful, angry, violent one. The other wolf is the loving, compassionate one." The grandson asked him, "Which wolf will win the fight in your heart?" The grandfather answered, "The one I feed. (Thank you Michael Butler)

May all beings be happy.  
Amen.

NONPROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA  
PERMIT No. 10

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

Peace. Please help us to continue making this newsletter possible with ever rising printing & postal costs. Your donation may be considered a tax deductible item as the White Robed Monks of St. Benedict are a recognized Non-Profit Religious organization (USA).



OR, if by check, (WRB), mail to:  
White Robed Monks of St. Benedict  
Post Office Box 27536  
San Francisco CA 94127-0536

And thank you. May many blessings be to you and yours now and forevermore. Peace and joy!

**White Robed Monks of St. Benedict**