

# The Art of Frugal Hedonism

Post by “Pacatus” of February 18, 2023 at 6:45 PM

Forgive this over-long, rambling post. This is all a general synopsis of past studies (of which much is forgotten) -

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Years ago I spent a good deal of time studying (in my own schlocky way) various renditions and interpretations of the perennial philosophy (taken broadly). There really are versions of it within most religions (Advaita Vedanta in Hinduism; Kabbalistic theology, as partially reflected in the Talmuds and Midrash, as well as the Zohar, in Judaism; the Laoist mainstream of Taoism, etc.) - albeit with different expressions (ice cream with different flavors: who wants to argue over whether chocolate or vanilla is “the right one”™?). Those versions are not necessarily considered “orthodox” to religious or philosophical sectarians.

A general perennialist would argue that emphasizing the differences is ultimately delusional (sectarianism is illusion). The “orthodox” sectarians would call the perennialists heretics.

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The foundation (again broadly) is that there is some universal “ground of being” or “field of being” (supernatural or natural) from which every individual manifestation arises, of which they are, and to which they all return - generally relinquishing whatever existential individualism one might have enjoyed during the journey.\*

I don’t know if Advaita Vedanta is the oldest expression, but the “mahavakyas” of the Upanishads are probably generally representative (where “Brahman” is that underlying universal ground/field):

*Sarvam khalvidam brahma* - All this is Brahman.

*Ayam atma brahma* - This very self (that I am) is Brahman.

*Tat tvam asi* - That (Brahman) thou art.

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With that, I’ll truncate this brief 😊 recollection with a possible Epicurean spin (that hopefully does not stray into any Platonic idealism or Stoicism): If the whole field of our existence is defined by atoms and void, then we are formed of those atoms, and when we die, they are simply dispersed into that field. And we - as individual existences - are simply gone: nothing to fear.

And if the “field” is just atoms and void (or whatever analogues might be dominant in current physics), does the notion of a universal field (or ground) become just a metaphor\*\* that might well be useful – as long as it is not reified into some “thing-in-itself” substance? [I think that would be my position.]

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\* I once wrote a brief poem on this:

How tragic for the single flame to fear

annihilation in the larger fire

or water-drop to be afraid to fall

again into the vastness of the sea.

\*\* Years ago I read a book that I no longer have, called *The Metaphors We Live By*. The thesis was that we often – likely unreflectively – allow our behavior to be guided by metaphors at least as much as reasoned analysis. Metaphors such as: *tempus fugit*; *carpe diem*; a stitch in time, etc.