

Stephen G. Post

Stephen G. Post - Monthly Newsletter

Greetings Friends:

This is a monthly note kept brief, with a quick ANNOUNCEMENT and then a few very brief REFLECTIONS.

ANNOUNCEMENT

First, an ANNOUNCEMENT of the 2016 application deadline for the Larson Fellowship at the Library of Congress for researchers interested in health, spirituality, and associated themes. Dave Larson, MD, was one of my best friends for a decade before he died suddenly in 2001 at a relatively young age, leaving behind his wonderful wife Susan and two awesome children. Lots of great researchers and scholars have held this post since

inception 14 years ago. I can never forget going with Susan to visit the Librarian of Congress, James Billington, and selling him on having the Larson Chair at the Kluge Center. Mr. Billington (d. 2015) was the father of Susan Harper, whose husband Charles Harper was the incredibly brilliant Executive VP of the Templeton Foundation at the time. Sir John was thrilled with this development, as he also was a close friend and supporter of Dr. Larson.

The John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress is now accepting applications for the David B. Larson Fellowship in Health and Spirituality. The application deadline is April 17, 2016.

The Larson Fellowship is a post-doctoral fellowship for advanced research in the field of health and spirituality. Made possible by a generous endowment from the International Center for the Integration of Health and Spirituality (ICHS), the fellowship is named in honor of the Center's late founder, David B. Larson, an epidemiologist and psychiatrist, who focused on potentially relevant but understudied factors which might help in prevention, coping, and recovering from illness. The fellowship is designed to continue Dr. Larson's legacy of promoting meaningful, scholarly study of these two important and increasingly interrelated fields. It seeks to encourage the pursuit of scholarly excellence in the scientific study of the relation of religiousness and spirituality to physical, mental, and social health.

Conducting full time research on-site at the Library of Congress, the fellowship provides an opportunity for a period of 6 to 12 months of concentrated use of the collections of the Library of Congress, through full-time residency in the Library's John W. Kluge Center. A stipend of \$4,200 per month supports the Fellow.

Apply for the Larson Fellowship by visiting:

<http://www.loc.gov/loc/kluge/fellowships/larson.html>

The application deadline is April 17, 2016.

Received this email from a colleague? [Subscribe](#) to our RSS feed to stay up-to-date on [research opportunities](#) from The John W. Kluge Center. Follow us on Twitter: [@KlugeCtr](#).

The John W. Kluge Center was established at the Library of Congress in 2000 to foster a mutually enriching relationship between the world of ideas and the world of action, between scholars and political leaders. The Center attracts outstanding scholarly figures to Washington, D.C., facilitates their access to the Library's remarkable collections, and helps them engage in conversation with policymakers and the public. Learn more at:

<http://www.loc.gov/kluge>.

FOUR VERY BRIEF REFLECTIONS

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "SPIRITUAL"?

"Spiritual" is a difficult concept to define because it is deeply personal and individual, and goes beyond formal notions of ritual or religious practice to the very essence of who we are. But the concept can be captured with the help of a "word cluster" of contrasts, an approach inspired by my friend the Brazilian linguist Francisco Gomes de Matos: compassion over indifference, humility over humiliation, cooperation over isolation, kindness over cruelty, transparency over deception, mind over matter, forgiveness over revenge, equality over disparity, oneness over fragmentation, security over fear, rights over abuse, empathy over detachment, respect over discrimination, tolerance over fundamentalism, liberty over oppression, life over killing, love over hatred, giving over hoarding, peace over war, and

hope over despair.

HINDUISM AND A UNIVERSAL MIND

I was in the Union League of Philadelphia on Abraham Lincoln's Birthday and observed the statue of Lincoln by the great American sculptor Daniel Chester French (d. 1931), who also did the Lincoln Memorial. French was a friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson and a Boston Transcendentalist, which is to say that he was heavily influenced by Hinduism. Critics refer to his image of Lincoln as "the Hindu Lincoln." Emerson and French were quite metaphysical. They believed that

1. There exists only one original, eternal, and universal Mind, beyond time and space, of which each individual is given a small drop.
2. The essence of that one Mind is pure love and creativity, which is to say that our deepest individual essence and calling is to be free extensions of creative love.
3. Mind precedes all Matter, which derives from Mind and is sustained by Mind as an underlying matrix of Ultimate Reality.
4. We are all connected in Mind, which explains our human spiritual inclinations, mysticism, extraordinary creativity, premonitions, deep transforming experiences, and the like.
5. All worthy religions and spiritual philosophies converge on one Mind and its essence as love, albeit they all differ wonderfully in their symbols and cultural expressions. There is no one path, and to think that there is constitutes arrogance and invites religious violence.

The funny thing is that when I was in Bangalore two months ago in early December at the Indian Institute for Advanced Studies, I discovered that most deep thinkers in India, with notable exceptions, believe these key points with ease, and feel that in future centuries these things will perhaps be clarified through mathematics and physics. This was certainly Sir John's emphasis.

Always eager to learn, I drove up last week to French's home and studio in Stockbridge, Ma. to get a better sense for his worldview, and took in some Rockwell, Niebuhr, Edwards, and Arlo Guthrie as well.

THE WORLD IS A MESS: REASSERTING THE GOLDEN RULE AND TEN EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE OF HUMANITY

When the happiness and security of another is as real or meaningful to you as your own, you love that person. And such Golden Rule love is expressed according to the needs of others.

Loyalty is love made visible in sticking with others. Commitments must sometimes be set aside, but never frivolously and always with minimal harm.

Humility is love made visible by leaving self-inflation behind so there is space in the room of life for others and even for a shared humanity. Humility is not humiliation, but we are after all fleeting. (Humus meaning earthen)

Compassion is love made visible in responding to the suffering of others.

Celebration is love made visible in acknowledging the benchmarks of people's lives.

Helping is love made visible in generosity of action both small and large.

Forgiveness is love made visible in freeing others from the turmoil of their guilt and in opening up the possibility of reconciliation based on analogy

Humor is love made visible in tasteful uplifting mirth so others can see a path to a better future.

Carefrontation is love made visible in honestly addressing the destructive behavior of others, especially when they have inflicted wanton harm.

Respect is love made visible in humbly "looking twice" at the opinions of others. (Respectare meaning to re-look)

Attentive listening is love made visible in the focused presence that sets aside your own narrative in favor of those of others.

Creativity is love made visible in using your talents and gifts as called for the benefit of humanity.

This was the basis of www.whygoodthingshappen.com

MISTAKES AND LIFE AS AN EXPANDING CANVAS

Life is a bit like an expanding canvas. Today you made some huge mistake, and whatever happened might seem like the worst thing ever, like a horrid blotch on the middle of a canvas that just looks ugly. This is how Jackson Pollock's paintings looked before he expanded outwards with every kind of color and dripping to the point where however bad that blotch looked initially, it evolved into a magnificent painting of beauty. Hard lessons are learned hard, and that's the only way. To say that life is an expanding canvas means that given time and a sincere effort to make the best out of a difficult situation, what looks unfortunate today can look plausibly fortunate tomorrow, or at least eventually. The canvas is always expanding, and hope is having a faith that difficult moments are good moments once the artist has time to work.

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