

031508 Saturday

Playful Actions (Photos)

As background for the following, I invite you to read my

- Brief Self-Introduction
- Current Activities page

and, if you're especially ambitious, my

- Worldview Summary

Playful Actions (Text Summary)

- shaving and showering
- helping Dad get up in the morning
- helping Dad dress
- cleaning the kitchen
- drinking coffee
- enjoying Free Day food, including Aliana's original, marshmallow lasagna recipe
- helping Dad view DVD recordings borrowed from the Enlightenment class (part of The History of Christianity, with emphasis on intellectual history) at Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist (CCUU); these lectures focused on the philosophy of David Hume
- discussing with Dad his reactions and mine to the philosophy of David Hume, Ayn Rand's views about Hume and hers by contrast; plus my worldview in relation to consciousness, its means and its limitations
- homeschooling with Aliana, emphasizing reading and question-asking
- doing laundry (moving, folding, sorting)
- cleaning and organizing especially in our room
- catnapping

- helping Dad walk many times
- helping Dad walk for exercise

- chatting with Cherita including about websites

- preparing yesterday's blog entry

- listening to audio of Eckhart Tolle, The Power of Now

Playful Reflections (Text)

Impression of the Day

Today qualified as another, very full day for me.

Worldview Elaboration: David Hume, Ayn Rand and Vid Axel on Consciousness

As part of my review of today's playful actions, I mentioned that I helped Dad view two, DVD lectures. These were part of a series of classes (now offered at church) which focuses on the Enlightenment. These two lectures focused on the life and thought of David Hume.

Following his viewing of the lectures, Dad and I began to discuss them. Specifically, we discussed of the philosophy of David Hume.

(Throughout this post, when I quote, I paraphrase from memory.)

Early in our discussion, Dad said, "I'm not sure I know anything."

I chuckled and said, "Are you feeling quite sure that you might know nothing?"

He smiled.

After a pause, he asked - recognizing how deeply immersed in Ayn Rand's philosophy of Objectivism I had been for two decades - "Did Ayn Rand have anything to say about Hume?" I'm guessing that he felt confident that this would get me going.

I mentioned that nowadays, for multiple reasons, I feel much dissatisfaction with what I take to be Ayn Rand's propensity to moralize. By my standards, this moralizing stood in the way of her more deeply appreciating why various thinkers formulated views with which she disagreed.

I also mentioned that in watching one of the lectures about Hume, I felt grateful. I felt that way because I gained a deeper appreciation for what I gather were his fundamental intentions in formulating his philosophy.

I mentioned that it struck me that in expressing his dissatisfaction with various thinkers whom he regarded as dogmatic, Hume sought to pay attention to a crucial attribute of consciousness. Consciousness, he maintained, isn't produced by revelation, as if some supernatural power were magically beaming awareness into a person. Instead, Hume insisted, consciousness involves both natural means and limitations.

At least as I gather Hume is commonly interpreted, however, in the following respect, I formulate my worldview differently than he did.

Given that our consciousness involves means and limitations, and that consciousness is mediated by a process, Hume is said to have disputed that we can ever know the nature of "things in themselves."

(With the expression, "things in themselves," I don't feel remotely as satisfied as I would prefer. In the following remarks, I will take it that Hume maintains that, instead of remaining aware of the world, we remain aware only of our impressions.)

Rand did offer a response to Hume, I told Dad. She maintained that implicitly, Hume held consciousness to a supernaturalistic standard and faulted it for failing to live up to that standard.

I explained that I found this paradoxical, since it seems to me as if Hume had striven to develop a philosophy in an effort to overcome what he regarded as the limitations of the supernaturalistic model of human knowledge!

Returning to Rand, though, she maintained that yes, consciousness involves an identity, a process and limitations. Nevertheless, she did not consider the failure of consciousness to receive magically beamed revelation as any kind of a failure to remain aware of the world. By contrast, she maintained that the only kind of consciousness which could ever actually function of course would involve an identity, a process and limitations. Such were the means by which any consciousness could be aware of the world - not the obstacles to such awareness.

Within my own worldview, I agree with what I take to be Rand's position that consciousness involves an identity, a means and limitations. I agree with Rand that consciousness takes place by some means and in some, specific form. I agree that consciousness as a faculty gives us awareness of the world.

Rand uses this model to maintain, for example, that all forms of sensory perception qualify as instances of authentic awareness rather than creators of illusion.

Even so, however, I take a radical step which, by my understanding, Rand never took. Indeed, I imagine that in response to my taking such a step, she would have reacted with hostility.

I take Rand to maintain the following. She limits to the sensory perceptual level her idea that human consciousness always involves authentic awareness. Once we reach the conceptual level, though, our consciousness no longer functions automatically. Human beings embody free will, can choose to focus their minds or not, and by this means can cripple their consciousness conceptually. (To me, she seems to imagine that much of the time, most human beings are indeed crippling their own minds!) For Rand, only once one meets specific, rigorous, epistemological criteria can one justifiably claim to be conceptually aware.

This all relates to my idea that overwhelmingly, Western thought (and perhaps most human thought in recorded history) has remained preoccupied with the question of "true versus false." By contrast, I conceive of truth as a biological, human need which each person satisfies to different degrees along a continuum - an idea which I introduce in my worldview summary.

So in my worldview, I take my interpretation of Rand's idea of being conscious "by some means and in some form" and, in a different sense than she does, I apply it to the conceptual level, as well.

By my standards, all forms of thought and conceptualization fundamentally remain instances of authentic awareness rather than illusions. For me, though, thoughts, worldviews and so on model the world. Some model the world more efficiently than others. But all of them model the world.

I look forward to writing more about these and related ideas in the future.

Gratitude

- I'm grateful to myself for writing about my worldview. This helped meet my needs for self-expression and progress.
- I'm grateful to myself for staying current with my blog.
- I'm grateful to myself for completing all the forms of housework that I did today. This helped meet my needs for order and progress.
- I'm grateful to Aliana for giving me an opportunity to contribute with our homeschooling efforts.
- I'm grateful to Cherita and Aliana for their companionship and communication.
- I'm grateful to Cherita for her productive, professional work and economic support.
- I'm grateful to Cherita for her help developing my website.
- I'm grateful to Cherita for her help caring for Dad.